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## EDITH CAVELL

### *The Crime That Shook the World*

By S. THEODORE FELSTEAD

At dawn, on October 11th, 1915, there were executed at the Tir National shooting-ground, Brussels, two patriots: Edith Cavell, an English nurse, and Philippe Bancq, a Belgian architect. Thus culminated a story of heroic devotion to country and unselfish compassion towards the unfortunate, with few, if any, parallels in the Great War of 1914-18.

When war broke out Nurse Cavell decided to remain at her post, that of Matron of a Brussels clinic. Soon she became involved in the extensive traffic that arose after the Battle of Mons in the succouring and repatriation of Allied soldiers cut off from their units. So large was this organisation, and so many were the people involved in it, that a traitor was bound to crop up sooner or later.

In this book, which is based on the secret German Police dossier of "L'Affaire Cavell" discovered after the war, the author describes in vivid and moving words the whole story of Nurse Cavell, her many helpers, and their betrayers.

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# *Edith Cavell*

THE CRIME THAT SHOOK THE WORLD



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## THE CRIME THAT SHOOK THE WORLD

Written from the dossier of the  
German Secret Police and the  
personal narratives of survivors

*by*

S. THEODORE FELSTEAD

*Author of "German Spies at Bay,"  
"Under the German Heel," etc.*

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# CONTENTS

	PAGE
CHAPTER I . . . . .	I
CHAPTER II . . . . .	18
CHAPTER III . . . . .	31
CHAPTER IV . . . . .	43
CHAPTER V . . . . .	56
CHAPTER VI . . . . .	68
CHAPTER VII . . . . .	80
CHAPTER VIII. . . . .	88
CHAPTER IX . . . . .	97
CHAPTER X . . . . .	109
CHAPTER XI . . . . .	121
CHAPTER XII . . . . .	141
CHAPTER XIII. . . . .	167
CHAPTER XIV . . . . .	184
CHAPTER XV . . . . .	191
CHAPTER XVI . . . . .	205



## INTRODUCTION

WHAT MAY NOW BE TERMED THE FIRST GREAT WAR brought many rude shocks to a world that fondly believed barbaric methods to be only an unpleasant memory of the past.

But it was speedily brought home to the enemies of Germany that the Great War of 1914 would not be fought in any spirit of chivalry. From the moment that Germany marched into Belgium, the so-called rules of war were brutally and cynically thrust into the background, and the people of that unoffending little kingdom were subjected to martial laws which have no parallel in modern times.

The introduction of poison gas in March, 1915, opened the eyes of the Allied Powers to the fact that Germany would stop at nothing to achieve a speedy victory, just the same as the bombing of open towns and the murder of defenceless civilians in Poland proved that all the promises of the German Chancellor to attack nothing but military objectives were the foulest of lies.

When the Cunard liner, *Lusitania*, sank beneath a German torpedo on May 7, 1915, we had reached another stage of German "frightfulness," designed to terrify neutrals, regardless of all preconceived agreements about submarine warfare—a policy which has already been repeated in the case of the *Athenia*.

## INTRODUCTION

The civilised nations of the world had hardly recovered from the horror and fury of the *Lusitania* atrocity when it became known that the Germans had shot in Brussels a gentle, grey-haired English nurse named Edith Cavell, in circumstances that all went to prove she had been done to death in surreptitious haste before the news of the authorities' intentions could leak out.

If the sinking of the *Lusitania* was responsible for universal disgust and loathing, it was of but trivial importance by comparison with the odium that was heaped on Germany for an act of vengeance carried out in a manner that even a race of savages would despise. All that Edith Cavell did merited nothing more than a term of imprisonment.

But apart from the invidious exaction of the death penalty in the case of only two of the offenders in what has gone down to history as "*l'affaire Cavell*," the methods adopted to convict the prisoners were such as to make one wonder what had happened to Germany, the cradle, according to her own account, of the world's *Kultur*.

I have in my possession to-day the dossier of the case prepared by the German secret police in Brussels, which sets out from beginning to end how all the prisoners were persuaded and terrified into incriminating each other with complete disregard of the elementary principles of justice.

One fact stands uppermost: it is a laboriously concocted document, intended for presentation to a War Council which would be kept in complete ignorance of how it had been compiled, knowing only,

## INTRODUCTION

according to its contents, that each and every prisoner had admitted his or her guilt.

Little or nothing was revealed of the outrageous tactics resorted to in the extraction of these confessions—and nothing was asked. However, such tricks were all part and parcel of the German rule in Belgium, and the outside world heard few whispers of the travesties of justice that were practised by the secret police and spies who swarmed over the country killing and transporting thousands of men and women accused of committing treason.

In a book of this description it is hardly possible for me to quote from the dossier *in extenso*, much as I should like to. Nor have I bothered to set out word for word the confessions and statements made by the prisoners. Space is barely available, and for another thing no good purpose would be served by recapitulating admissions dragged out of people with death hanging over them. Apart from that, these admissions were written out in German and signed—no doubt with trembling hand—by captives who did not, with one exception, understand a word of the language. Nurse Cavell's confession was such an instance.

In any properly constituted Court of Law such a fact would have been sufficient to ensure acquittal. But not under a German War Council. The cases they heard were all pre-arranged, and if they did chance to acquit a prisoner, someone in the secret police had blundered.

What I have written here may be regarded as the truth about *l'affaire Cavell*. Films have been produced on this historic episode of the First Great War, but

## INTRODUCTION

some of them, in my view, fail to do justice to the many people, apart from Nurse Cavell, who played a part just as prominent as hers. Death passed them by ; it was Nurse Cavell's fate, like that of the Brussels architect, Philippe Baucq, to give up their lives and thereby achieve immortality.

## CHAPTER I

**D**AWN WAS BREAKING OVER BRUSSELS. It was the morning of October 12, 1915, fated to become a memorable day in the history of the Great War. The stranglehold of the German occupation had choked all the early life of the city to an unwonted quietness.

Outside the grim, red-brick castellated pile which represented the prison of St. Gilles, about three miles from the centre of Brussels, two women were waiting in the dawn with fast-beating hearts. They had been there for two hours, peering with tensely-drawn faces at the gaol gates opposite, agonisedly hoping to see the woman whom the German military power had condemned to death.

The morning was soft and warm. The drizzling rain which had fallen overnight still glistened on the pavé road ; but there was a tinge of autumn warmth in the air, with the promise of one of those beautiful days which make Brussels such a fascinating city in the fall of the year.

But the two women who watched and waited were in no mood to appreciate the beauties of the breaking dawn on a morning like this. Word had reached them overnight that their beloved friend, Edith Cavell, the Englishwoman who directed the School of Infirmières in the rue de la Culture hard by, had been

condemned to death and would face a firing-party at seven o'clock.

The frantic efforts they had made to save the stricken woman had come to naught. The hastily-evoked aid of the American and Spanish Ministers, whose strenuous and emotional appeal to the German authorities had met with an uncompromising refusal, had written *finis* to the life of Edith Cavell. There was now nothing left to the two waiting women but to obtain a last glimpse of a noble-minded martyr being surreptitiously done to death by the German Military Governor.

Shortly after six o'clock three motor-cars drove up to the prison gates. The twittering birds foraging round in the road flew up in alarm. From one of the cars a man in police uniform laboriously got out, rang the bell and disappeared inside. Within a few minutes the dreaded procession came forth. Edith Cavell was in the centre of a group of men, one of whom wore the dress of a German pastor. Her face was fixed and drawn, and it gave no hint of the turmoil that must have possessed her.

An officer took her by the arm and put her into a car. Just as she was about to step into it she glanced up, and as one saying a last farewell, gave a brief, pathetic nod to the two women waiting opposite. Did she think, even as the sands of her life were fast running out, that a more definite recognition would have meant danger to the two watchers? If she did, it was typical of that unselfish nature which had marked her entire life.

Another little group came out of the prison, with

a short, bearded man in the centre, white and harassed in his appearance. It was Edith Cavell's fellow-victim, Philippe Baucq, a Brussels architect, who had been her devoted colleague. The first man to be arrested, he had also been sentenced to death under a law that did not really exist.

It was nothing more than a matter of a minute or two before the cars moved off on their fatal journey. Mutely, with quivering lips, the two women stood silently watching, not even daring to wave a farewell. When the cars had disappeared, they, too, vanished, for it was not safe to linger in the neighbourhood of a place such as St. Gilles if you had no business there.

\* \* \* \* \*

Four miles away from St. Gilles, in the commune of Schaerbeek, there is a wide expanse of dreary-looking ground which is known as the Tir National. In reality, it is a rifle range used by the Belgian army. While engaged in the compilation of this book I went over it. The great, draughty, echoing building which is used as a musketry school made me visualise the terrible feelings that must have possessed poor Edith Cavell and Philippe Baucq as they were hurried through the vast hall on the morning that they were to die.

One could imagine the resounding tramp of the heavy footsteps, the grim and stolid faces of the company of Landwehr, 250 strong, who stood to attention outside to give what the Germans no doubt thought an atmosphere of impressiveness to the historic scene. What were the thoughts of these men as they saw alight from one of the cars a frail, little grey-haired woman with set face, who was quickly

hurried inside to where the firing-party awaited her ? Surely she could not be the dangerous English spy of whom there had been so many whispers ?

Through the vast hall the doomed pair were taken to a small enclosure with a verandah at the back. A party of German officers awaited them. There was the Bavarian who had been their prosecutor, Doctor Stöber ; the German commander of St. Gilles prison, William Behrens ; a medical officer named Benn, and one or two more officials. They were joined by the two clergymen attending the prisoners, Edith Cavell being accompanied by Pastor Le Seur, and Philippe Baucq by the Rev. Dr. Leyendecker, the German Roman Catholic priest.

Two firing parties of eight men each stood rigidly at attention. By the look on their faces it was evident that they had no liking for their task, and with no loss of time the two captives were led out a short distance in front of the verandah and stood at poles some five or six paces away from the firing party. The clergymen stood by their side as they were loosely bound to the poles and blindfolded.

The sentences had already been read out by Stöber, who was in charge of the proceedings. Exactly what this disciple of German *Kultur* said beyond reading the pronouncement of the Military Governor that Edith Cavell and Philippe Baucq were to be shot will probably never be known. He addressed some words to the firing-party, saying that both the condemned persons were spies and that for the safety of the German army they must not think they were doing wrong in shooting a woman. She had been responsible for conducting

hundreds of men to their enemies and had therefore, indirectly, been a party to the deaths of many of their fellow-countrymen. And then came this extraordinary excuse : " It is very sad to have to shoot this woman, but she is not a mother, and therefore you will do your duty as soldiers."

With business-like rapidity the last preparations were completed. The two clergymen whispered what words of consolation they could find at such a terrible moment, and then stepped away. A sergeant-major in charge of the firing-party waited a nod from Stöber and then, sharply raising his hand, cried out the command to fire.

There was a crash of flame from the sixteen rifles. Edith Cavell sank to the ground, gave one convulsive shudder, and then lay still. All eyes were fixed on her. The pastor, Le Seur, rushed forward, as did the medical officer. Her poor bleeding body had paid its tribute to the work of the secret police who had so industriously run down the organisation that had been agitating the Germans in Brussels all through the year.

The two coffins which were in readiness were brought forward, and the bodies of the martyrs hastily placed in them. Later that day they were buried in an improvised cemetery, there to remain until the end of the war, even after the American Minister, Mr. Brand Whitlock, had requested that they should be buried in consecrated ground.

The firing-parties marched off. . . . Dr. Stöber, as a man who had seen a task well done, drove back to Brussels, little recking of the after-effects of his work.

It may not be out of place to state here the " autho-

rity," if one may use the word, for doing these people to death. Under Paragraph 58 of the German Military Code, it is laid down that :

Any person who, with the intention of aiding the hostile Power or causing harm to German or allied troops, is guilty of one of the crimes of Paragraph 90 of the German Penal Code, will be sentenced to death for treason.

The particular crime referred to in this Paragraph 90 is that of conducting soldiers to the enemy (*dem Feinde Mannschaften zuführt*).

\* \* \* \* \*

Legally or otherwise, the crack of the rifles which reverberated over Schaerbeek on that fatal morning were as nothing to the reverberation of horror which echoed over the civilised world when it became known that the Germans had shot in cold blood a grey-haired woman in her fiftieth year, whose whole life had been devoted to ministering to the sick and suffering.

One could compare the effect of this dastardly deed to that of a stone thrown into the middle of a pond, the ripples of which are almost unending. Out in the streets of Brussels at 11 o'clock in the morning the people stood with horrified faces reading the sinister red posters with which the Germans had already placarded the city, announcing the fate of the prisoners, who had been condemned by the court-martial held a few days previously.

They were saying to each other that it was assassination—not a judgment according to law. But there was nothing they could do. The iron heel of the

## EDITH CAVELL

invader crushed all rebellion as effectually as it silenced open condemnation. The other prisoners who had been sentenced to death, three of them, still lay in St. Gilles awaiting their end. They did not know until a few days later that the storm of fury and disgust which swept over the world when Edith Cavell's fate became known was to be the means of saving them from a martyr's grave.

\* \* \* \* \*

When the Germans evacuated Brussels in 1918 with ignominious haste, they left behind them in the rue de Berlaimont, where their secret police had had their headquarters, thousands of documents which were subsequently utilised by the French and Belgian Governments for the prosecution of the innumerable traitors and renegades who had been in the pay of those notorious policemen, Lieut. Ernest Bergan and Henri Pinkhoff.

These secret police disappeared so hastily, leaving behind them masses of incriminating papers, that one can only conclude they were obsessed with the idea that some of the Belgian people whose relatives had gone to their deaths through the machinations of Section B. (the official designation of Bergan's "station") would assassinate them before they had time to get out of the country.

Whatever the reason of the abject speed with which they departed for the Fatherland, the fact remains that they left in the rue de Berlaimont evidence of their nefarious activities which was well worth collecting. Hence the appearance at their ex-headquarters of a

party of patriotic Belgians who invaded the offices and carried out piles of papers which were thrust into a cart waiting outside. Three or four lusty Boy Scouts assisted in the good work, and by the time a little sorting out had been done there was the material for a hundred treason trials.

The dossier of the Cavell case was missing. A thoughtful German Secret Service officer, no doubt with an eye to the future, had taken it away with him. It is a most remarkable document, because it discloses the diabolical cunning with which Bergan and Pinkhoff, aided largely by a plausible, English-speaking international courier named Otto Mayer, extracted confessions and statements from all the people who fell into the hands of the secret police over *l'affaire Cavell*.

It was something more than an amazing coincidence that the thirty-five people who were tried at the Senate House in Brussels on October 7-8 with harbouring and conveying men to the Allied armies should all have made confessions. At least, that was the effect of the evidence which Bergan handed over to the vindictive Dr. Stöber, a Bavarian who was specially brought to Brussels to prosecute the members of the organisation.

How were these thirty-five confessions obtained? Anyone who is at all well acquainted with criminal procedure will hardly need to be told. It was the old, old trick of the specious, soft-spoken friend saying: "Confess, and all will be well. I shall use my influence to get you a light sentence." And when plausible, hypocritical pretence had failed there was always in the background the bawling, bullying Bergan, to play upon the fear of death which must

inevitably have possessed the minds of all his prisoners.

Anyhow, this dossier remained hidden for many years. It would probably never have seen the light of day had I not chanced to come across an officer of the Allied Secret Service, who had heard of its whereabouts, and informed me that it might be bought.

Who would not snatch at such an opportunity? Here was the most romantic episode of the war, a story that will go down to posterity by reason of the courageous figure of Nurse Cavell, who said the night before her execution to the British chaplain in Brussels, "I am happy to die for my country."

Noble words from a noble woman! When one thinks of the calm and serene courage with which she met her doom, bearing animosity to no one, one must stand fascinated at the revelation of such a soul.

The experienced eye can see, reading between the lines of all the confessions, how names were dragged out of a captive under the merciless interrogation of Bergan and Pinkhoff, aided by a series of "confrontations" with other captives when the answers were not to their liking. It was, in short, nothing less than "third degree," such as would never have been tolerated by any properly constituted court. It was the business of Bergan and Pinkhoff to produce a cast-iron case—and they produced it.

Will it be believed when I say that, with thirty-five people being tried for their lives, only three witnesses were called for the prosecution? Two of them, needless to say, were the arch-villains of the piece, Bergan and Pinkhoff, and the third was a thirteen-year-old boy, the son of one of the accused!

However, I am going to leave my readers to form their own judgment as to how German justice ran in Brussels in those momentous days. The dossier does not tell everything about the innumerable shady subterfuges which were adopted by Bergan and Pinkhoff to gain their ends. It was not until the war had finished that there came to light an almost incredible story of treachery and foul dealing on the part of two Frenchmen in German pay, Georges Gaston Quien and Armand Jeannes.

I shall deal with these two renegades in their proper place. Before passing on to the real beginning of this tragic and romantic tale of the war I want to tell my readers something about the three arch-conspirators who were responsible for this historic dossier.

\* \* \* \* \*

Lieutenant Ernest Bergan, the notorious head of Section "B" of the German Secret Police, was a florid-looking man with dangerous black eyes, who gave his age at the time when he stepped into the witness-box at the court-martial, as thirty-six. He seemed more, and one may be permitted to remark that if he was only thirty-six he had accumulated a vast amount of bullying ability in that time. Up to the date of his arrival in Brussels he was a *Kommissar* of the Düsseldorf police.

He had not been in Belgium long before the people christened him "*Schwartzteuffel*" (The Black Devil), and a devil incarnate he was. Nobody will ever know the number of unfortunate Belgians he sent to their death.

The prisoners who fell into his hands found him, if they were amenable to his wishes, quite an agreeable companion. It was a favourite ruse of his to pretend sympathy with them, and then wheedle out of them the evidence that would end with a firing-party.

But cross him, and then see what happened ! The comradely tone suddenly flashed into that of the loud-mouthed bully. Not for nothing had he been sent from Düsseldorf ; there were very few criminals in that city who did not dread an interview with Lieutenant Bergan. He spoke no French whatever—which made him all the worse. The few words he could understand always made him suspect that he was being defied. Many a time did the Belgian people passing along the rue de Berlaimont hear him shouting at some unfortunate creature who had got into his clutches. He learnt a little French as time went on, most of it consisting of such phrases as “ Unless you tell the truth it will be bad for you. You cannot fool me.”

He was, without a doubt, a most efficient cog in the German military machine, but if the Belgians could have got hold of him when the end of the war came he would have received short shrift.

Like many another man in his position, he rose to fame on the shoulders of his subordinates. The principal of these was the Jew, Henri Pinkhoff. Here, if you like, was a clever man, doubly dangerous with his suave, soft-spoken manner and the hypocritical sympathy with which he approached his victims. He was an ugly-looking brute, with his coarse face, besmirched by a big purple mark which made him

easily recognisable wherever he went. He boasted a great knowledge of languages, and he certainly had Bergan in his pocket when it came to interrogating prisoners.

Rumour said that he had lived many years in France as an agent of the German Secret Service. I take leave to doubt that. The French counter-espionage service smells out spies with unerring instinct. Undeniable it is that for a long time he ran a shop in Paris for the sale of umbrellas and walking sticks, which may have been a blind for other and more sinister activities.

Pinkhoff was certainly the clever psychologist; at sizing up his fellow-beings he made few mistakes. He would talk, and talk and talk, asking hundreds of apparently unnecessary questions, while all the time his mobile, restless brain was engaged in piecing together items of information to be used later. He loved to play upon fear. Another favourite trick of his was confronting his prisoners with each other, demanding to know who had spoken the truth, while his eyes gleamed with malicious delight.

When an interrogation was taking place he would do a lot of whispering with Bergan in a corner of the room, then come back to fire a few more incriminating questions. At all events the Germans decorated him with the second-class order of the Iron Cross. Some little time after the war a story went round Brussels that he had been assassinated. On the other hand, one of the women whom he had trapped in the Cavell case thought she saw him in Brussels only a few years ago. She tried to follow him, but soon lost sight of him.

A worthy henchman of these two brutal villains was the English-speaking Otto Mayer, a stout little German with a red face, who for some time lived at Maida Vale in London. He had been employed for a good many years as a courier for a well-known firm of tourist agents. How he got into the German police is a mystery; there is no question that, with his excellent knowledge of English, he was invaluable to Bergen and Pinkhoff.

Mayer it was who went to the *clinique* in the rue de la Culture when Nurse Cavell first became suspect. He met more than his match in Sister Elizabeth Wilkins.

"How many have you got left?" began Mayer, with an oily smile on his face. He was an ingratiating little man, the type that would run with the Belgian hare and hunt with the German hound.

Sister Wilkins knew perfectly well what he meant; but she preserved her sang-froid with admirable courage—though at the time there were four English soldiers in the place—and replied: "Oh, we haven't got so many left now. Most of our nurses are Belgians."

"I'm not talking about nurses," retorted Otto. "I am referring to soldiers."

"Soldiers! What makes you think we've got any soldiers here?"

The Sister said it so cleverly that Mayer fell for the bluff.

"If you think we've got any soldiers here," she added, "you'd better search the place. If you look in that bureau," nodding at a desk in a corner of the

room, "you'll find full particulars of everybody here."

Otto took the bait. He sat down to wade through what he thought might be very incriminating matter. Sister Wilkins, for her part, silently slipped out of the room, warned the four men who were in hiding to make themselves scarce, and got them out of the *clinique* before the unwelcome visitor ruefully came to the conclusion that he was on a false scent.

The dandified Dr. Stöber, described as the Military Auditor, who prosecuted Nurse Cavell and the thirty-four other prisoners, went to the length of describing her as the head of the organisation. It was a gross lie, as was the statement that she had inculpated eight other people for whom he demanded a death sentence.

\* \* \* \* \*

Simplicity was the keynote of Edith Cavell's life. Her father, the Rev. Fred Cavell, the rector of Swardston, in Norfolk, was a man of small means, and the early years of his daughter Edith's life were spent as a governess in Belgium. Then, at a comparatively late age for the profession, she qualified at the London Hospital as a nurse.

Her bitterest denouncers among the Germans could never have accused her of being actuated by anything but the spirit of charity towards all mankind—though that did not stop the senile Governor-General of Belgium, von Bissing—when it was painfully brought home to him that her execution would be condemned throughout the world—from describing her as a spy.

For some years she was employed at various public hospitals in London, notably the Shoreditch and St.

Pancras Infirmaries. She looked forward, and took pride in the fact, to nothing better than a life of useful work attending the sick. It was in the year 1907 that she received the offer of the post which was fated to make her the heroine of the Great War. Her friend, Doctor Depage, a leading Brussels surgeon, intended to open a *clinique* consisting of four houses in the rue de la Culture, a short distance from the centre of the city.

His choice fell upon Nurse Cavell with the idea of entrusting her, not only to be the head of the *clinique*, but also to establish a school for trained nurses—nursing work being then performed largely by various religious orders.

Nurse Cavell was at the time in her forty-second year, and thoroughly adored by everybody with whom she came in contact. One does not know what money she received for her services—probably not more than £150 a year. She was not a woman who coveted money. For seven years her life went on more or less uneventfully, varied only by occasional holidays to her relatives in England.

It was nothing short of a disastrous chance that she ever became involved in that chain of events which brought her to her death. She had been on holiday in England shortly before the outbreak of war, and returned to Brussels only on the Sunday preceding the beginning of hostilities. When the storm-clouds were gathering over Europe, and her friends and relatives attempted to deter her from going back to Brussels, she replied: "What does it matter? There will be wounded men to nurse, and my place is at the *clinique*."

On Sunday evening, twenty-four hours before the British ultimatum to Germany expired, she arrived back, grave of face, but cheerfully determined in her manner. Six weeks later the German authorities in Brussels gave her the opportunity, in company with all the other English nurses, of leaving the country.

She elected to stay on, having in her mind that, as she had said, there would be wounded men to nurse, and that, as she remarked at the time, it would not matter whether they were German or English.

Truth, they say, can always outbid fiction. By one of those astounding coincidences which occasionally happen in real life, the woman who was really responsible for the historic rôle that Edith Cavell played in the Great War was herself a victim of a German atrocity that shook the world.

Madame Depage, the wife of the doctor who owned Nurse Cavell's *clinique*, had left Brussels early in 1915 to join her husband, who was conducting a Belgian hospital in London. Then she had gone on a trip to America, and was coming back to England in the *Lusitania* when the big Cunard liner was torpedoed off the Old Head of Kinsale.

She was seriously injured at the time, and did not long survive, dying a day or two after reaching land. Madame Depage it was who sent to Nurse Cavell the engineer Hermann Capiou, who for some time after the Battle of Mons had been devoting his energies to succouring the stragglers left behind in the retreat.

Still another coincidence is worthy of record. A second woman fated to be associated with Nurse Cavell had also hurried back from England when war

was imminent, little dreaming of what was in store for her. This was Princess Marie de Croÿ, a member of a thousand-year-old family which is related to half the royalties of Europe.

A delicate woman whose life had been devoted to good deeds, she, too, had returned home from London immediately war threatened, speedily to realise that her home at Bellignies, close to Mons, would be engulfed in the tidal wave of the German invasion.

She and Nurse Cavell, both unknown to each other at the time, were to find a place in that Valhalla of fame to which many of us aspire but few attain—Nurse Cavell to die a martyr's death in Brussels, Princess de Croÿ to escape death by a miracle and to return to her home, shattered in health, after three years in a German convict prison.

One might say, indeed, that the two women were remarkably similar in their characteristics—modest, self-effacing, and sublimely courageous. Nurse Cavell had known nothing but comparative poverty all her life; she had enjoyed no other luxuries than are the everyday lot of the nurses who staff those economically-conducted institutions where every penny has to be counted.

At the ancient Château of Bellignies life was almost equally simple; Princess de Croÿ spent most of her days ministering to the comfort of the villagers, never thinking that a day might come when this placid existence would suddenly cease.

## CHAPTER II

**I**N ORDER FULLY TO UNDERSTAND the sequence of events which preceded Nurse Cavell's precipitation into the storm and stress of war, it is necessary to turn to Mons, that obscure little mining town, some thirty miles from Brussels, which sprang into such prominence in the early days of hostilities.

It has remained famous, but unrightly so. What history now knows as the Battle of Mons should properly be described as the Battle of the Borinage, the district outside Mons. Mons itself is a railway junction of some slight importance, and there was no fighting at all within the town.

However, leaving these little discrepancies on one side, I must pass on to the days when General von Kluck, the German commander whose name was soon to become an object of derision in the British Army, was sweeping through Belgium on that far-famed march to Paris which was to end so disastrously.

Princess de Croÿ had arrived home to find her brother, Prince Reginald, already there. With anxious hearts they had seen the British Expeditionary Force passing through, two or three miles distant, on its way to fight the Battle of Mons.

For three days and nights the distant rumble of artillery shook the château windows. The Red Cross flag over the house hung idly in the hot summer air ;

the Princess looked with anxious eyes at the wounded British soldiers who lay in her rooms. Liège and Namur had fallen; the troops who had occupied Bellignies were now in the thick of the fight.

Incredible news came drifting through. Von Kluck, overwhelmingly superior, had battered his way through. The retreat from Mons, which was to send a wave of dismay throughout the world, was in full blast. The wounded men who had been brought to Bellignies could give no accurate description of the fighting, except that they had been subjected to terrific gun-fire and charge after charge from the grey-clad masses, who came on regardless of their losses.

Prince de Croÿ had gone out to succour the wounded; his sister, torn with anxiety as she watched the retreating troops, had gone out into the road seeking news. At last, from among the disorganised masses of soldiers, she found an officer. His tidings were ominous.

"The Germans are close behind," he said, taking the Princess on one side. "You will be wise to get your wounded men away as soon as possible. And you had better get away yourself as well," he added.

Late into the night, with the help of the brave villagers, Prince and Princess de Croÿ worked unremittingly to save the men who lay in the upstairs rooms of their château. Four men, too badly wounded to be moved, had to be left behind; then, and not before, the de Croÿs insisted on their eighty-four-year-old English grandmother, Mrs. Parnell, making her escape while there was yet time.

The old lady was reluctant to go ; the fighting spirit of her West of England ancestors urged her to remain. But eventually she gave way, only to come back, three or four hours later, to report that her motor-car had become hopelessly blocked by the retreating army and the thousands of now homeless people fleeing before the invading hordes.

The tide of battle flowed on. Bellignies itself became comparatively quiet ; the gun-fire had ceased. If it had not been for the wounded Englishmen upstairs, the de Croÿs might have wondered whether it was not all an unpleasant dream.

But they were soon to be undeceived. Early in the morning of August 25 the noise of trotting horses called them to the windows of the château. A reconnoitring patrol of Uhlans, with pennants on their lances, were hurrying through the village. A few minutes later a German regiment came into view.

Another swarm of Germans invaded the château, demanding water. Then came a French-speaking officer, who seemed to have no time to spare. " You are to receive an Army Staff," he said harshly, and without waiting to hear or say any more, disappeared as dramatically as he had come.

Silently, asking themselves what fate would overtake them now, Prince de Croÿ and his sister stood outside their front door watching the château gates. Suddenly there glided in a procession of long grey cars, the leading one flying the Imperial Eagle of Germany. It drove up to the door, and as the Prince and Princess went down the steps to meet their self-inflicted guests they found themselves confronted with a heavily-built

man with a fair beard, who was joined in a moment by another, an elderly, harassed-looking officer wearing the badges of a general.

History if you like ! The stout, important German bowed to the Prince and Princess, and in excellent French said : " Let me present to your Highnesses General von Kluck."

Not to be outdone in courtesies, von Kluck also made deep obeisance, and introduced his companion as the Duke of Schleswig-Holstein—" the brother of our Empress," he added somewhat unnecessarily. He need not have made the explanation ; the Duke was already well known in Belgium as the man who had married Dora, the daughter of that eccentric Princess Louise whose quarrels with her father, the old King Leopold of Belgium, were the talk of Europe.

A swarm of officers descended from the fleet that had entered the château grounds, and took possession of the house. The war had come with a vengeance. On their way to the rooms which had been allotted them the Duke and his army commander caught sight of the wounded soldiers. Excitedly they questioned the Princess as to how they had come there ; were there any officers ? Obviously they wanted to subject them to interrogation ; they were quite disappointed when the Princess told them the last one had left the day before.

The Duke, whatever his royal rank, had no respect for the niceties of war. He had only been in his room a few minutes before coming down again to requisition the services of a doctor, with whom he proceeded to pull the bandages off the wounded men ! When

Princess de Croÿ demanded to know the reason for such disgraceful behaviour, the doctor calmly retorted that the men might be shamming.

Nor was the brother of the German Empress more remarkable for his courage. With his own august hands he went from man to man, pulling back the bedclothes to see if they had a hidden jack-knife.

"This is outrageous," cried the Princess. "Do you want these men to die?"

"I don't want my throat cut in the middle of the night," retorted the Duke. "See!" he exclaimed triumphantly, holding up a knife one of the men possessed. "We know the English soldiers carry these knives to kill our wounded!"

In pursuance of not ending his life just then, he, as well as von Kluck, locked himself in his room that night, after conducting a minute inspection of the neighbouring rooms and passages to ascertain whether any would-be assassins were lurking round!

That, however, was nothing to what had happened at dinner. The poor Princess, worried out of her life, was crossing the hall to attend to her wounded men when the Duke stopped her, his face crimson with anger.

"Is it correct, madame, that you are not dining with us?" he demanded.

The Princess looked him straight in the face as she replied: "You can hardly expect it in the circumstances."

"Oh," said the Duke, "then we may all expect to be poisoned?"

What could one do with such a creature?

"My only wish is to save life," the Princess answered. "As you were not invited here, you cannot very well expect us to sit at table with you. It would be most uncomfortable."

"You will dine with us," growled the royal gentleman. Just then there was a commotion in the courtyard. Some British prisoners had been brought in, and the Duke hurried out to see them. Prince George of Saxe-Meiningen, the nephew of the Duke, came in and begged the Princess not to anger his uncle unnecessarily, adding, which was obvious, that the Duke was a nasty-tempered person.

The Saxe-Meiningen boy was a distant relative of the Princess—such are the anomalies of war!—who had been to school in England. For the sake of peace and quietness the Princess and her brother sat at dinner that night with twenty-odd German officers of von Kluck's staff, eating spoonfuls of everything their self-imposed guests ate, just to prove they were not poisoners!

Conversation, as may be imagined, was rather strained. The de Croÿs kept their ears open for any items of news that might be usefully despatched to the Expeditionary Force, until von Kluck—much better behaved than his eminent colleague—growled out; "Gentlemen, you will not speak about the war." He had already informed his host and hostess that he would be in Paris within a week!

These historic scenes—what absorbing pictures of war they would make if they could be fully described!

Appalling stories were passing round the Mons district of the fate that was being meted out to the men

who had been cut off in the retreat from Mons. Thirteen English soldiers who for the better part of three months had escaped the field police by hiding in a miller's hay loft near the village of Miron were caught, and in cold blood, with no semblance of a trial, put up against a wall and shot. The miller, accused of harbouring the men, shared the same death.

Notices were now posted all over the occupied area warning all villagers to surrender the men on pain of summary execution; any inhabitant who hid an enemy soldier would be instantly shot. It was war . . . ruthless, bloody war. The Germans were in mortal dread of the *franc-tireur*; they never slept of a night without expecting their throats cut by those terrible, silent spectres of the Franco-Prussian war.

Early in October—when Bellignies happened to be empty of Germans—Prince de Croÿ and his sister were walking on the lawn in front of the château with a friend when two ladies approached them and asked if they might speak to the Prince. They introduced themselves as Mlle. Louise Thuliez, a schoolmistress from Lille, who had been spending her holidays in the village of St. Waast, a short distance away, and Mlle. Moriame, the sister of a brewer who had already gone to join the French army.

It was an extraordinary story they related to the de Croÿs. When the war came they had courageously remained behind to do what service they could, rightly concluding they would be just as well off in a small village as in the occupied city of Lille. Mlle. Moriame had gone out after Mons, picked up six or seven

wounded British soldiers, hidden them in her brother's house, and nursed them back to health.

"But what shall I do with them now, Monsieur?" she asked the Prince. "It is no longer safe to keep them. They, as well as I, will be shot if the Germans find them. For myself," she added bravely, "it does not matter. But I cannot bear to think of these poor men losing their lives without a struggle. Could you not help us?"

Alas! it was but one instance of many. The Countess de Belleville, a neighbour of the de Croÿs, had found many wounded and dying men after Mons; she told dreadful stories of creeping out after dark and bringing men into the convent of Audregnies. The Germans had forbidden the inhabitants to move out by day, and many an unfortunate soldier whose life might have been saved lay for days unattended, slowly gasping out his end.

The Prince said he would do what he could; the men must wait until he could find them a safe hiding-place. In the 30,000-acre Forest of Mormal owned by the de Croÿ family there were numbers of woodmen's cottages—a wonderful refuge if everybody kept silent.

"You must look after the men a little longer," said the Prince. "It is probable that I shall be able to help you, but I must first take the cottagers into our confidence. Without that we can do nothing; they are just as liable to death as you and I."

He was as good as his word. The people in the forest were only too willing to shelter the English soldiers, and swore themselves to secrecy. Late one

night the stragglers were taken away from St. Waast, distributed among the peasants, and warned on peril of their lives not to betray their helpers. Getting them away was a problem that only the future could solve. It was as much as Prince de Croÿ could do just then to keep them hidden.

How many stragglers from Mons were there in the neighbourhood ? It is a poignant mystery which must for ever remain a mystery. Almost incredible was the number of men who gradually came to light once it was whispered round the countryside that assistance to escape might be forthcoming. Peasants crept about the mining villages whispering the news ; nuns in the convents who had been hiding wounded soldiers, despairing of their ultimate fate, plucked up fresh courage when they heard of the sanctuary in the Forest of Mormal.

The band of refugees grew larger and larger. Mlle. Thuliez and her friend, inspired by the success of their first mission of mercy, set out to scour the countryside for more men. Dozens of British soldiers were found hiding in miners' cottages ; with true British philosophy accepting the situation as it came, they had burnt their uniforms, donned a dirty old suit belonging to their temporary host, and for the nonce turned miner. They blackened their faces, smoked their pipes, and even exchanged rough chaff with the German troops marching through the villages.

But they could not continue doing this for ever ; the sinister placards in French warning people who harboured enemy soldiers that they would be summarily shot made it imperative that the fugitives should get away at the first opportunity.

Two men had already made their escape to Brussels, and called at Nurse Cavell's *clinique* in the rue de la Culture. She was very suspicious of them at first, but ultimately, in the face of their pathetic pleas, took them in, warning them that if any questions were asked by the German police, they were to say that they were patients of hers who had been there before the outbreak of war.

Some days later she was able to hand them over to a Belgian friend who promised to get them across the frontier; she then had no organisation whatever, nor any wish to be involved in the dangerous business of smuggling men out of the country.

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In the early days of November, already perplexed about the fate that would overtake her beloved *clinique*, Nurse Cavell, much to her surprise, received a visit from a complete stranger, who introduced himself as Hermann Capiou. If he had not brought a note from Madame Depage, Nurse Cavell would probably have refused to listen to the astonishing story he had to tell. However, Madame Depage vouched for him.

He was an engineer from the little town of Wasmès, which was close to Mons. While visiting a lawyer friend named Albert Libiez, living in Mons, he was informed that an English colonel and a sergeant were in hiding in the convent of Wiheries.

"Incredible as it may seem, Miss Cavell," said Capiou earnestly, "they have been there for three months. After the Battle of Mons, having lost their regiments and fearing to give themselves up, the nuns

took them in and fed them as best they could. But now," the engineer went on, "they are in Brussels. The colonel would not stay in Wiheries any longer. The German police are making house-to-house searches all round the neighbourhood, and shooting all fugitives; this colonel thinks that it would be safer for him in a big city, where he might hide until there is a chance to make his escape."

Nurse Cavell looked doubtfully at her visitor, as though she would read his innermost thoughts.

"Where are they?" she enquired at last.

"In the street. I have brought them with me from Madame Depage's house in the Avenue Louise."

"How did you reach Brussels?" asked Nurse Cavell. "It cannot have been easy without papers."

"No," said the brave Capiau, "but that risk had to be taken by someone. We could not see these poor men being shot without making a fight to save them. They have had a terrible time. We have done the best we can for them, but the colonel especially is in a bad way."

Nurse Cavell hesitated no longer. "Bring them in," she said promptly, "but for God's sake exercise care. I am terrified at the thought of what might happen if we should be caught."

The colonel was indeed a case for pity. He was not a young man, and the horrors of Mons, with his long confinement in the convent of Wiheries, expecting day and night to be dragged out and shot, had reduced his nerves to breaking-point. The sergeant, Meachin by name, who belonged to the Cheshire Regiment, had gone through the ordeal better. . . . He was still

ready to fight, and told Nurse Cavell that the Germans would know it before they took him.

It was a harrowing story they had to tell; half-starved, living like animals in the darkness, surreptitiously fed on anything the nuns could provide. The wonder was that they had lived through it. There had been a nightmare journey to Brussels with the courageous Capiau, riding on trams, fearful of arrest at any moment, seeing a policeman in every German, begging an occasional lift on some peasant's cart.

"Well," said Nurse Cavell quietly when she had heard the full story, "I must keep you here until I can get you away. I have some Belgian friends who will help me, but you must wait."

Just as well, perhaps, that Nurse Cavell was compelled to hide her poor stragglers for some little time. The colonel was in no state to undertake the arduous journey that lay before him if he wanted to reach Holland. He remained in the *clinique*, receiving everything that could be done for him, until his protector came to him one night to say that a guide was ready to see him across the frontier.

Nurse Cavell bade her two refugees good-bye with a certain amount of relief; some months were to elapse before she was able to accustom herself to the ever-present danger of harbouring stragglers of whom she knew nothing. Her profession of training nurses could not be completely neglected, and there was always the risk that an injudicious word from one of them might easily bring the German police. Not until March, 1915, when Mlle. Thuliez, Albert Libiez the lawyer, Hermann Capiau the engineer, and Georges

Derveau the chemist of Mons, in conjunction with Prince and Princess de Croÿ, joined forces, did there come into existence the formidable organisation which succeeded in sending hundreds of men to join the Allied armies.

The whole thing was intermittent throughout the winter months. The fighting had died down after the Battle of the Marne; now and again a few men turned up, with weird stories to tell of living in miners' cottages until it became impossible for them to be sheltered any longer. They had been posted as missing, but here they were, desperately anxious to take any risk that might lead them back to England.

### CHAPTER III

**B**ELLIGNIES ITSELF IS A VILLAGE standing just inside the French frontier, and its château bears but few characteristics of the country. According to legend, the tower which stands on the right of the château dates back to the Middle Ages.

The de Croÿ family had been in possession of Bellignies and the immense Forêt de Mormal hard-by for many hundreds of years, and from time to time had built and rebuilt the château, but leaving the tower untouched.

It had no apparent use, at any rate in the twentieth century. Its walls were three feet thick, and for some hundreds of years various generations of de Croÿs seemed to have looked upon it as nothing more than an ancient curiosity, neither particularly useful nor ornamental.

Some years before the Great War, however, Princess de Croÿ came across family documents which seemed to indicate that the old tower held a secret. Mention was made in these age-old papers of a staircase being hidden inside the ponderous walls. An architect was brought in, and, after days of tapping round the bottom of the tower, it was revealed that there was entrance to it from one of the windows near the ground. It had been walled in ; but when the stone was removed the staircase stood revealed.

What had it been used for ? Only a guess could be made. Probably a hiding-place in those exciting times the Lowlands enjoyed in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, when the Spaniards overran the country.

Similar times had returned ; the de Croÿs were scouring Bellignies and the surrounding district high and low for spots where the men they had saved from the battlefields might be hidden in safety until they could be guided into Holland.

It was in October, 1914, that the first of the many men who were to owe their lives to this secret staircase arrived at Bellignies. In a Red Cross hospital at Bavoy Prince de Croÿ encountered a British officer, Captain Preston, who told him that as soon as the opportunity offered he would make his escape.

Escape he did, leaving behind him in his bed a cleverly-made dummy which effectually deceived the German guard in the hospital ; and, making his way with desperate courage, arrived at Bellignies. Here, in a disused part of the château, Captain Preston lived, with the secret staircase, almost undetectable from the outside, ready to dive into the moment an alarm was sounded.

There could be no doubt from the story Preston told that the vast Forest of Mormal, most of it belonging to the de Croÿs, was full of stragglers. But if they were to be saved money must be forthcoming. No local banks were functioning, and small sums were obtainable only by going into Brussels.

Prince de Croÿ eventually succeeded in obtaining a pass from the German authorities in the capital to

cross into Holland. Thence he travelled on to England, and finally to the Belgian Government headquarters at La Panne, where he was able to get the money so badly wanted. In due course he returned to Bellignies unsuspected by the enemy, to find that exciting events had been occurring.

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Preston had told Princess de Croÿ of a large body of men hidden in the forest—so large that he thought it possible for them, under proper leadership, to get through to Lille.

She found them, after infinite difficulty, hidden deep in the forest in a spot known only to a patriotic guide who, to her unutterable amazement, conducted her on a seemingly endless journey to a clearing surrounded by tremendous oaks. She found herself gazing at a sabot-makers' hut which might have been a regimental headquarters.

A smart young officer stood at the door awaiting her arrival. Around the place were dozens of French and English soldiers, and the Princess learnt that they had been cut off after the battles of Charleroi and Mons. The youthful officer in command of this strange body was Lieutenant Bushell of the 2nd Dragoon Guards, who with sublime courage had collected stragglers by ones and twos and brought them into the forest, where they had formed themselves into a small but determined force prepared to sell their lives dearly. All they wanted was arms—a problem that was almost insurmountable. To provide food was not so difficult; there were brave-hearted villagers on the outskirts of the forest, only too anxious to help.

Princess de Croÿ returned to Bellignies for the time being. Some days later she received a visit from a young girl who brought a note from Lieutenant Bushell to say their position was rapidly growing desperate. German patrols were regularly beating the forest, and using dogs to track them down ; unless they were rescued immediately capture and death were certain.

At incredible risk the little party was brought to Bellignies and hidden in various parts of the château. But it soon became impossible to feed them, much less to keep them securely hidden from the enemy soldiers always prying round the neighbourhood. One evening at dusk in early November, Captain Preston collected the men and explained the situation to them ; they agreed that it would be better to surrender themselves and to become prisoners of war rather than suffer the death that would inevitably be theirs if they were caught.

Late one night, therefore, they were led into the village of Bavay, where the Mlle. Thuliez mentioned in the preceding chapter of this story met them and handed them over to the Mayor.

That functionary, with grave misgivings, put them into the Red Cross hospital, and the following morning took upon himself the invidious task of reporting to the German commandant that a party of English soldiers, come from he knew not where, had reported themselves to him.

It was a tale hard to believe ; the German concluded, after an inspection, that the prisoners looked much too well to have been hiding for more than two months. They arrested the Mayor, and for several days kept

him in the dread of death ; ultimately, however, he was released, and the soldiers went to German prison camps, while life at Bellignies, with Princess de Croÿ quite unsuspected, gradually resolved itself into a siege.

For many miles round the villages were plastered with notices warning the inhabitants, on penalty of death, to surrender hidden soldiers ; courage was required to secrete men, never knowing when an enemy patrol would arrive.

But, as time went on the villagers organised proper search-parties to find the fugitives, and one by one they were brought to Bellignies, there to wait until Mlle. Thuliez or some other reliable guide could be found to take them into Brussels.

Almost unbelievable were the courageous deeds performed by some of the people who had hidden these men. The old *curé* of Salesches concealed for six months half a dozen French and British soldiers, begging the food from his parishioners to keep them alive, and living himself on nothing but vegetables. Then, after the men had been taken away and sent through Nurse Cavell's hands to reach Holland in safety, the patriotic priest insisted that his house be used as a resting-place for the guides going to and from Brussels.

Retribution, alas ! ultimately overtook M. le Curé ; one fine morning the District Kommandant descended upon him, and found sufficient traces of strange people having lived in the house to justify him sending the *curé* to Germany as an "undesirable," a term that in the eyes of the "occupant" resembled charity—it covered a multitude of sins.

Just as fearless were the children of the neighbourhood who, with youthful contempt of the enemy, enrolled themselves as helpers in this fascinating game of hide-and-seek. Charlotte Matha, the wife of a miner who had gone off to fight for France, had a daughter Suzanne, aged twelve. Suzanne's great chance arrived one dark winter's evening when an expected guide failed to appear. She was wakened out of her sleep late at night at her mother's suggestion and asked to conduct a party of men to a house where a man from Brussels would be waiting.

Gleefully the child, who knew every inch of the country, consented. Leading the way in the dark, dodging behind hedges at the slightest sound, she led her charges to their destination. Many times afterwards did little Suzanne carry out similar missions, and never once did the enemy suspect her.

War's scares and alarums went on incessantly around Bellignies. The châtelaine herself had no easy task merely to sit at home, never knowing when a patrol would arrive. Someone would come flying in with the news that the police were smelling round—the signal for all the men in the château to take to the secret staircase post-haste.

One morning a search-party arrived with the intimation that a fine supply of wine was hidden in the cellars. It was all too true; with rueful face the Princess watched a gang of looters loading the wine into a cart they had brought, and knocking the heads off a few of the bottles for themselves with a dexterity which seemed to denote considerable practice.

Then came another marauding band; from a

window of the château the Princess saw the officer in charge pointing, to her vast horror, to a group of fir trees where some dozens of Lee-Enfield rifles and cartridges had been buried by a party of British soldiers who had since gone on to Brussels.

Tensely the Princess waited for the discovery that would probably mean death for them all. Prince de Croÿ was home at the time ; he went outside to ask what was wanted. Judge of his unspeakable relief to learn that all the Germans sought was one of the firs for a Christmas tree !

As well, perhaps, that these comic interludes occurred to relieve the ever-present fear during the long, sleepless hours of the night with the château full of men. Fortunately the Germans were faithful to routine ; they usually arrived in the early morning—no doubt working on the adage that it is the early bird that catches the worm.

In March, 1915, Mlle. Thuliez brought to Bellignies a number of men belonging to the King's Royal Rifles and Connaught Rangers, whose experience was typical, perhaps, of those of many cut off in the retreat from Mons.

Their regiments had been to all intents and purposes wiped out ; the colonel of the Connaughts, leading the remnant of his battalion, was wounded by a chance shot and taken prisoner, leaving a young lieutenant in charge.

Gradually the little party grew smaller and smaller. They were fed by farmers ; a nurse they encountered promised them food, but turned out to be a German. Cavalry came out looking for the men, who

succeeded in making their escape in the fast-setting darkness.

Weeks went by, and the number diminished still further. Many of the men were caught by patrols, others gave themselves up. Those who stubbornly refused to surrender roamed around the countryside, living like the beasts of the field, thankful to find occasionally some villagers ready to take the risk of sheltering them, if only for a week.

Shortly before Christmas, 1914, all that now remained of the party found a comparatively decent refuge in the village of Le Sart, and here they lived, underground most of the time, posing as miners. They picked up some crude French, and little dreamt as the villagers taught them that "Wee, Monsieur," as they pronounced it, which was to be their reply to anything a German might ask them, would eventually save their lives.

In the middle of March word was brought to Le Sart that Mlle. Thuliez would shortly be in a position to take four of them away. They were to be clothed as farm-labourers, and, to add verisimilitude to the rôle, horses would be provided for them—not to ride, but to lead away in the direction of Bellignies, where Princess de Croÿ would do her part towards helping them on to Brussels and safety.

Through the deep and awe-inspiring forest of Mormal the men were guided until Bellignies was safely reached.

"I must put you into my Black Hole," said the Princess, and to their amazement the four stragglers, after a hot meal, found themselves let in through an

apparently blank wall into a place as black as ink. Groping round, they found a ladder which had to be climbed, the last man pulling it up with him. They were in a small chamber, where they had to remain until everything below was absolutely quiet.

However, their fresh captivity was none too long. An hour or two later they were released, and the Princess informed them that in twos they would be taken on to Mons, and thence, if all went well, to Brussels.

Four days elapsed. The Princess took their photographs for the false identity cards they had to carry. Then came little Suzanne to lead the first pair to the guide who would see them into Mons.

Clad in their peasant clothing, and striking across fields as much as possible, they reached Mons on the third day, only to find the town greatly alarmed over a series of raids taking place everywhere. For a fortnight the two soldiers lay hidden in a house ; it was a month after their leaving Le Sart before a woman who had specially come out from Brussels was able to hand them over to Nurse Cavell.

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They found the *clinique* in a state of ferment which, alas ! was all too frequent. A raid was expected ; two men sent to Holland had been caught, while another pair despatched in company with them had made their way back to the rue de la Culture loudly complaining that the guide had walked them straight into the Germans and then run away.

A false alarm, apparently. The guide came back to the *clinique* that night, and Nurse Cavell, thoroughly

uneasy over the insubordinate manner of several men, arranged for him to take four more the following morning.

A private of the K.R.R., one of those who had returned to the *clinique*, refused to go with the guide and Jameson, the Connaught Ranger who had just been brought in from Mons, volunteered to take his place.

Their journey to England, home, and beauty was not without its comical side. Setting out at six o'clock in the morning, they boarded a tram which would carry them to the outskirts of Brussels. But they did not know where they were going, or what fare they had to pay. All of them had been given a little money, and the German conductor who demanded their fares never saw the pantomime which went on behind his back while the guide was trying to make his charges understand they must say "*vingt-cinq centimes*."

All the Belgian people in the tram were vastly enjoying the joke; the only one who didn't understand was the conductor, who retired to the rear cursing all Belgians who couldn't see a poor Boche doing his duty without laughing at him.

They made their way towards Antwerp, undergoing innumerable thrills. In Antwerp itself there were hundreds of German soldiers walking about as though no war were in existence; the refugees passed them by without arousing one suspicious glance. Right through the city and past the forts they followed their guide, until a canal was reached.

A cautious whistle brought a man from a hut who

was obviously expecting them. He stepped into a boat and rowed them across.

In the direction of the frontier they trudged on, getting greatly alarmed at the reception the inhabitants gave them. Men, women, and children crowded at cottage doors, calling to all and sundry to see the English soldiers. An estaminet hove into view, which they found to their dismay to be crammed with German troops. It was evening, and fortunately most of them were drunk. The four human scarecrows who trooped in aroused no remarks, and after a glass of beer and a sandwich they left, wondering whether the frontier would ever be reached.

Shortly after eight o'clock the guide announced that he must leave them. Holland was in sight, but how they were to get through the barbed-wire entanglements was a problem beyond them. The guide went off, after leaving them in an empty house, saying he would find them a place ; but before he went he produced a paper that he wished signed for Nurse Cavell, to prove he had really delivered them into Dutch territory.

They all signed, and were not disappointed when he failed to return. Nine, ten, eleven, and then twelve o'clock dragged by in weary waiting. At half-past twelve a woman came in, and the four men made her understand as best they could that the guide had deserted them.

She nodded her head comprehendingly, and made signs for them to follow her.

Evidently this getting through, or under, the frontier was a regular traffic. For half a mile in the blackness

of the night the four Englishmen dogged her footsteps. Then, to their unbounded amazement they found themselves in a trench, with a great barbed-wire entanglement above it. They could hear German soldiers parading overhead, and in grim silence they crept along until they reached a wide canal which was the dividing-line between Belgium and Holland.

Swim it they couldn't. Their rescuer wasted no unnecessary words. Swiftly she led them along its banks until a bridge was reached, when she signed to them to be silent.

She called something across to the sentry, and received an answer that was obviously a negative. Twice more did she urge him ; at the third time he succumbed, and four British soldiers who had been in the Battle of Mons crossed the bridge that led to friendly little Holland and ultimately England.

#### CHAPTER IV

ALL THROUGH THE LONG AND DREARY WINTER OF 1914-15 these stragglers were arriving in Brussels, where risk of detection encompassed Nurse Cavell and her helpers morning, noon and night.

Out in the countryside the men could move about in the shabby garb of the peasantry more or less unsuspected, provided they did not open their mouths. But in the smart capital these ragged, hunted men would be doomed if they were allowed to walk the streets; to get them out of the *clinique* as speedily as possible was their only hope of salvation.

Fantastic cases kept coming in. About five o'clock one afternoon in the budding spring a stout little miner, who introduced himself as August Joly from the Borinage, called upon Nurse Cavell, bringing with him an Englishman. It was dead against rules to do such a thing, and Nurse Cavell expressed her annoyance.

She relented when she saw the man; he told her his name was Ernest Stanton, and that he was a private of the 1st Middlesex Regiment who had also been at Mons. She took the two men into her sitting-room, excusing her greeting by remarking that German spies, posing as English and Belgian soldiers, were always trying to trap her. But obviously Stanton was no enemy agent; his drawn, hunted appearance, in the

dress of a Belgian peasant, told its own tale more eloquently than words. Her face, with its soft, sympathetic expression, inspired the unfortunate man to unfold, with feeling simpleness, the unbelievable hardships he had undergone since the retreat.

"I was cut off from my regiment on the third day of Mons," he began. "After wandering about the countryside for some days in company with another soldier of my regiment named Bosley, never knowing from one moment to the other when we would be shot, my little friend here," nodding at Joly, "found us in a wood. He spoke no English," Stanton went on with a ghost of a smile. "All he could say was 'English soldat ?' We said we were, and he signed to us to follow him. Wet to the skin, starving, we would have taken any risk just then.

"Joly took us to his little cottage, but when he told his wife that he intended to shelter us, she said, and rightly, too, that it would be too dangerous to try and hide the two of us in such a small place—as dangerous for them as for us. So Bosley went to another house in the village, which we discovered was called Wiheries and I tried to settle down to hibernating for the winter."

Nurse Cavell interrupted him. "All right, Stanton," she said quietly, "come straight upstairs with me and have some tea and a rest." She shook hands cordially with little Joly, saw him safely off the premises, and then took the poor straggler to his room. Sister Wilkins brought in the much-needed refreshment—Nurse Cavell always adhered to the English tea—and Stanton recapitulated his terrifying adventures.

The first trouble that had presented itself, apparently,

was the curiosity of the villagers. Though many people in Wiheries had taken in English soldiers, custom had not staled the inquisitiveness of the old women of the little commune. Wiheries, indeed, was full of such patriots; even the nuns in the convent had ventured out into the fields and woods searching for wounded and lost men, and when the dreaded field police had called to ransack the place, had placidly folded their arms and dared them to defile sacred buildings with their dirty feet.

When the news got round the village that Joly had found a couple of English soldiers the excitement was immense; the neighbours trooped in to inspect and speak with them. They found only Stanton, it is true, but their chatter over him was so voluble that Joly despairingly told his better half that something must be done to stop it.

"There must be a quarrel," he said to her decidedly. "I must come into the front room and ask why it is you are always gossiping with these inquisitive women. What business of theirs is it if we do have an English soldier in our house? Be off about your duties, my good woman!"

Wonderful little Joly! What miracles of ingenuity did he not contrive to keep his straggler safe and sound! The *pièce de résistance* of his plans was the cistern in the corner of the kitchen.

"The cistern!" ejaculated Nurse Cavell, smiling, despite the seriousness of her guest. For Stanton was a big, strapping fellow.

"Yes, the cistern," repeated Stanton. "He had to empty it of water, of course, and frequently through-

out the winter it became very awkward. When we saw any Germans coming down the street I used to crawl into this cistern, and there I stopped, crouched up for perhaps a quarter of an hour. Then they would give me the signal 'All clear' and I would come down again.

"But that wasn't the worst of it," Stanton went on. He spoke with intense difficulty. Nurse Cavell, with her experienced eye, could see how badly his troubles had affected him.

"After a time the cistern became unsafe. The Germans were constantly in the village, and eventually Joly cut a hole in the floor where I could hide myself in any emergency. I could crawl down below the boards and there, half-suffocated, with about six inches of breathing space above me, I had to remain until the Germans had disappeared."

"How long had this gone on?" asked Nurse Cavell, her eyes searching Stanton's face with that piercing intentness which was so characteristic of her.

"Since Mons," was the reply. "Over seven months. Twice Joly attempted to get me away, but he couldn't succeed."

Nurse Cavell sighed deeply. "You poor man, I must do all I can to help you. But you will be very careful, will you not? You are supposed to be a patient here and must talk to no one. And don't go near the window. It may be some days before I can hand you over to a guide who is going to Holland."

Her friend, Louis Sévérin the chemist, the man who had been her devoted helper since the preceding January, informed her about ten days afterwards that

his guide, Louis Gilles, would be taking a party of men across the frontier. Nurse Cavell herself conducted Stanton to the rendezvous ; there was no sign of the guide. Under the very noses of the dull-witted *Polizei* in their ugly grey uniforms and spiked helmets—Brussels swarmed with them—they waited with fast-beating hearts for over an hour. Poor Nurse Cavell was as nervous as her charge. At last she said to Stanton : “ Come on, we can’t stop here any longer. Those two policemen,” pointing to a couple of men beginning to eye them suspiciously, “ are watching us. Don’t follow me at once,” she adjured warningly. “ Wait until I have gone on fifty yards.”

Thus they returned to the *clinique*. “ It is no use,” said Nurse Cavell when, with a sigh of relief, the door closed behind her. “ We must get the guide to call for you.”

Another few days elapsed ; more men found round Mons were brought in. Then, a fortnight after Stanton arrived, Louis Gilles turned up. He spoke of great difficulty in making his way into Brussels ; he had been compelled to hide continually before he could pass the guards now posted at all the entrances and exits of the city.

Nurse Cavell called Stanton to one side before he left. “ Here you are, Stanton,” she said with pathetic generosity, handing him a 20-franc note, “ it is all I can spare, but it will see you into Holland. God be with you.”

That was the last that Stanton ever saw of his noble rescuer. At intervals of some yards, he and the other men in the *clinique* followed Louis Gilles down the road

in the dead of night. They could get out by long-distance tram to within thirty or forty miles of the dreaded frontier, with its death-dealing electric wire barricades. The remainder of the journey took a week ; hiding in the ditches and woods by day, their intrepid courier safely got them across into Holland, and told them where they might get the train for Flushing.

Time had been when the old Landstürmers guarding the frontier would take bribes from anybody ; as the number of escapees grew larger, however, so the vigilance was redoubled. Landstürmers under suspicion were packed off to the Front—the place they all feared so much—and replaced by men who would shoot on sight.

One may well imagine, therefore, that Nurse Cavell's self-imposed errand of mercy grew no easier. Early in 1915, despairing, no doubt, of winning the Belgians to their side, the Germans reinforced their secret police, who had taken over an entire block of buildings in the rue de Berlaimont, with Lieutenant Bergan—a man with a supreme talent for the baser part of espionage—at the head.

Competent people put the number of secret police spies in Brussels at six thousand ! Many of them were Germans ; some, traitorous Belgians, not reluctant to sell themselves for a few paltry German marks. One could find them anywhere ; they sat in the cafés drinking beer and listening to conversation which might justify them in following the persons outside and denouncing them to the nearest policeman. Spy mania was the prevailing topic in Brussels ; it was

unsafe to open your mouth on a tram, fatal openly to express anything detrimental to the strutting officers who bumped their way down the streets pushing all and sundry out of their imperial path.

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Among the influential people who had become associated with Nurse Cavell's heroic work was a Belgian doctor of science, Georges Hostelet, who was in the employ of the millionaire manufacturer, M. Solvay.

Ardently patriotic as he was, it distressed Hostelet to see the risks that Nurse Cavell ran. Every time he visited her at the *clinique* it was obvious that there were men in the house. They could be heard shouting and laughing; it was nothing uncommon for someone to be singing an English music-hall ditty.

"What am I to do?" expostulated the poor lady with a shrug of the shoulders. "I cannot keep them quiet all the time. After what they have gone through it is only natural they should want to enjoy themselves a little."

"I am only giving you a warning," was the answer. "It is becoming common talk in Brussels that you are taking these men in, and therefore it is only a matter of time before it comes to the ears of the police."

Hostelet went on to tell her many suspicious things he had heard; she declined to listen to him, and said her house would always be open to men who wanted to fight. Heroic, but terribly imprudent. As Hostelet said, she must be trapped sooner or later.

Louis Gilles, her crack guide, had been shot dead getting across the frontier, and had been replaced by

another man who took the name of Victor Gilles. From the date of the Battle of Charleroi, when some thousands of men had been cut off from their units, hundreds of stragglers picked up by Libiez, Capiiau, and Louise Thuliez, were being brought into Brussels, handed over to Nurse Cavell, and then despatched on their trying journey to Holland.

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Life in Bellignies, where Princess Marie de Croÿ still held sway, was just as exciting as it had been in the early days of the war. True, the German army staffs no longer inflicted themselves on the mistress of the château—the war had now moved forward fifty miles—but there was just as much thrill to be obtained in dodging the police patrols who frequently raided the place, searching for the stragglers whom they knew to be somewhere in the neighbourhood.

One morning, there being about a dozen men in hiding, a horrified servant girl rushed in to say that the château grounds were full of Germans. The Princess's first move was to run to the little dressing-room used by the soldiers every morning, and with frantic haste send them back to their lair. She then walked outside to ask what her visitors wanted; they seemed strangely indifferent to anything that might be occurring inside the house.

"It is nothing, Princess," said the man who appeared to be in charge. "We are laying some new telephone wires!"

Scares! They lived on them at Bellignies. One afternoon the Kommandant, Baron von Mehring, a better stamp of man than the usual official who was

appointed to such posts, arrived at the château—uninvited, as usual—with the information that he was interested in archæology ; would Madame la Princesse let him see her secret staircase ?

In ordinary circumstances, Madame la Princesse would have raised no objections—war being war. Just then, unfortunately, there happened to be a party of English soldiers lying *perdu* in the staircase. However, it was no use giving the *Freiherr* a definite refusal ; his hostess let him examine the place, tap it with his walking-stick, and ask as many questions as he liked. Only when he began enquiring how one entered the staircase did she break her invariable rule of not extending any courtesy to the invader.

“ You would like some tea, *Freiherr* ? ” she asked without turning a hair.

The *Freiherr* said he would ; the situation was saved. And perhaps it was as well that he never probed the mystery of the staircase ! His life would have been the price of his curiosity.

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The difficulties were unending ; civilian clothing had become almost unprocurable. In some of the depopulated villages which the Germans had failed to plunder as fully as they might have done there was clothing to be found if someone would take the risk of getting it. Prince de Croÿ volunteered for the task ; accompanied by the *curé* he carried out his burglarious duties with much success.

All the planning, of course, would have failed had it not been for the ingenuity with which Capiau and Derveau fabricated the identity cards which were

indispensable in those stirring times. An engraver in Mons undertook the dangerous job of making a false stamp bearing the words "Administration Communale de Saint Jean, Hainault." There was no such place, but fortunately the German policemen who examined travellers' papers were blissfully ignorant of such a fact. Derveau, in another instance, provided many men with cards through the instrumentality of an elderly Belgian whom the Germans left in charge of their *Meldeamt* (Registration Office) while they went to their lunch. Cards were stolen, stamped with the name of the non-existent parish, as well as another one of which Libiez, in his legal capacity, held the die, and handed over, plus the Princess's photograph, to the men who were despatched to Brussels.

A masterpiece of clever plotting, of course, but more and more liable to discovery every day. So many men were now being sent through, and thereby involving the use of paid guides, that the Germans could hardly fail to find a traitor somewhere. Nurse Cavell had sent several people to Georges Hostelet begging him to find the money to pay these guides. They did not want a great deal; ten francs satisfied them. But, as they told Hostelet, they had to live, and it was highly dangerous work.

Nurse Cavell also continually found herself short. By the middle of May so many stragglers had been brought to the *clinique* that it became manifestly impossible to keep them there long. For perhaps a night they would be sheltered in the underground passage which ran beneath the four houses of the home; after that, when the arrangements had been

made, they were taken out to various lodging-houses and cafés in the city, with instructions to lie low until the guides were ready for them.

By the middle of June, when the secret police had been reinforced by a large body of *agents provocateurs* from Berlin, the difficulties of hiding the men in Brussels went from bad to worse. People grew reluctant to involve themselves ; there had been many raids, followed by arrests. Prince de Croÿ had succeeded in getting over to England, *via* Holland, to raise funds, and his sister, growing more perturbed every day, made up her mind to go into Brussels to see Nurse Cavell. In the Princess's mind there was no doubt that the time had come to call a halt.

She found Nurse Cavell as full of misgiving as herself. Though there was no fear in her steadfast eyes, she said to the Princess : " It would have been much better for you not to have taken the risk of coming here. You could have sent a messenger. Do you see those men outside ? " she added, pointing into the street. " They have been hanging round here for the better part of a week. If I go out into the city I am followed wherever I go. It is quite obvious that I am now under suspicion."

" I, too, am suspect," replied the Princess. " Things are becoming impossible at Bellignies. I have been raided three or four times in the last month ; it is only a matter of time before we are all caught."

Two brave women ! Nurse Cavell went on to tell the Princess that the police had already been in the *clinique* ; they had found nothing incriminating, however, because she had quickly burnt up the papers

which recorded particulars of all the men who had been through her hands. It worried her more, such was her conscientious nature, that Dr. Depage might doubt her word how she had spent his money.

The Princess reassured her on that point, and they went on talking about the possibility of bringing the work to an end. There was no mistaking the nervous tension which permeated the *clinique*; everybody seemed on the *qui vive* for a sudden shock.

They had practically agreed to cease taking further risks when Nurse Cavell asked her companion whether there were any more men in the neighbourhood of Bellignies.

"Yes," said the Princess, without thinking how fateful her answer was to be. "Mlle. Thuliez has found another large batch."

Nurse Cavell sighed deeply—she appeared to be very tired—and said, if that was the case, they must continue with their work.

"But I cannot have any more men here," she explained. "They must be brought into Brussels and handed over to people whose names I will send. Madame Bodart"—a British-born woman who kept an apartment house in Brussels—"is very safe and the police do not seem to suspect her."

They bade each other good-bye; it was not for another four months, till the time of the great court-martial in the Senate House, that they saw each other again.

It was perfectly true, as the Princess had been told, that the whole business was fast growing impossible. Guides had been caught and shot out of hand; getting

across the frontier, now that the German soldiers could no longer be bribed with impunity, was a task surrounded by death at every turn.

Some time after his return from Holland, in November, 1914, Prince de Croÿ had made the acquaintance of the Brussels architect, Philippe Baucq. From the beginning of the war Baucq had thrown himself heart and soul into the task of circumventing the enemy; he had played a prominent part in the establishment of *La Libre Belgique*, that audacious little paper which successfully twisted the German tail all through the war—long after the courageous Baucq had given up his life at the Tir National.

The Prince told Baucq of his trouble to find guides; how afraid they were becoming of falling into German hands. Then and there Baucq volunteered to take up the work regularly; he had already transported half a dozen men to the frontier, and he felt confident that he could succeed where others had failed.

## CHAPTER V

IT WAS MORE OR LESS INEVITABLE that the German secret police, with their spies everywhere, would soon get wind of this dangerous recruiting organisation. Equally inevitable also that they would employ an *agent-provocateur* to betray it.

Georges Gaston Quien was the name of the renegade they found. If the time should come when a playwright can adequately dramatise this almost incredible story of the Great War, he will find in Quien as strange a character as ever stepped into history.

Imagine a man six feet five inches tall, weedy in build, with weak, shifting grey eyes, close-cropped hair, furtive in his manner, and you have a good picture of the traitor who took the pay of the German secret police to act as a spy and *agent-provocateur*. Nurse Cavell half-suspected him from the moment she first set eyes on him.

Quien was in prison when the war broke out, serving a sentence at St. Quentin for some petty fraud. He had already been in gaol five or six times before, and one can readily understand the resentment he would feel towards the land of his birth. Shortly after the Germans arrived in St. Quentin he was released, and ultimately found employment as a waiter in a small café.

He had not been there long before the German

police, keenly on the look-out for secret agents, made overtures to him which he accepted. He was responsible for the trapping of dozens of his fellow-countrymen, whereupon the Germans decided to utilise him elsewhere. In the early part of 1915 they put him into the camp of Senneslager, in Westphalia, where some thousands of French subjects removed from the war area were engaged in forced labour.

The intention seems to have been to use him to recruit other spies, though the project apparently did not meet with striking success. He had not been there long before he aroused suspicion by talking familiarly with the notorious Henri Pinkhoff, addressing him as "my dear fellow." More suspicious still, he was in possession of a complete map of the camp, which he explained by saying he intended to escape—this within two hours of his arrival !

Exactly what happened to him at Senneslager is a mystery that only he and the secret police could have solved. It was not until some months later—in June to be precise—that the Germans planted him down in the town of Landrecies, in northern France, with the idea of spying out the organisation which was actively engaged in sending men to join the Allied armies.

This Quien seems to have been a specious sort of individual, and quite a lady-killer in his way. Also, it is not improbable that he appealed to the motherly instinct inherent in a woman's nature, for he was a delicate sort of man, with a well-developed aptitude for pitching a harrowing tale of his misfortunes. Be that as it may. At all events, posing as a Paris doctor whom the Germans had thrown into prison and then

released, he made the acquaintance of a farmer's daughter who knew a great deal about the work that Prince Reginald de Croÿ and his sister were doing in sending men through Brussels.

Quien professed great anxiety to fight for his country—and he also made love to the girl, telling her that after the war was over he would come back and marry her. So well did he play his part that within a few days he was taken to the château of Bellignies, where he informed the de Croÿs that he was an officer of the French 10th Territorial Regiment, who wanted nothing better than to get to the Front immediately.

The de Croÿs did not then suspect him. His tale sounded convincing enough, and the trusting Princess provided him with one of her cleverly made identity cards, as well as a small sum of money, and then handed him over to the Lille schoolmistress, Mlle. Louise Thuliez, who undertook the dangerous task of conducting most of the men through to Brussels.

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Mlle. Thuliez took Quien to Nurse Cavell's *clinique* in the rue de la Culture late at night. On the way into Brussels Quien had told her that he knew a guide who could help him across the frontier. He took Mlle. Thuliez to meet the man, and when Nurse Cavell heard of this episode she was filled with perturbation.

"Never do anything like this again," she said angrily. "There are no guides worth trusting to be found in the street where this man (Quien) has taken you."

Quien himself inspired no more confidence when

he repeated his story to Miss Cavell about being able to help her work. Dead against her better judgment she took him into the home and allowed him to remain there for a fortnight. He was, without a doubt, an ingratiating scoundrel.

"I shan't be able to go away just yet," he informed Nurse Cavell. "I can't walk very far. I've got a very bad ingrowing toe-nail."

This was true enough; he could only walk with difficulty, and Nurse Cavell kept him under treatment, anxiously awaiting the time when she could get rid of him.

Within a few days she had reason to regret her kindness. He began making love to the girls in the *clinique*, and on two or three occasions he slipped out at night with one of them, from whom he undoubtedly wormed vital secrets about the organisation of which Nurse Cavell was the head. Twice, when he was trying to pump Nurse Cavell herself, he was sharply told to mind his own business.

But it was fatally easy, not only to discover the names of the people with whom Nurse Cavell was boarding out her men, but also the places where they were being handed over to the guides—a fact which was painfully apparent when Nurse Cavell was arrested and interrogated. He seemed to have plenty of money to spend, and lavished it on the young probationers so well that his opportunities of acquiring information were endless.

At the end of June Nurse Cavell refused to have him in the *clinique* any longer. She called him into her office one afternoon and told him that he would be leaving for Holland in two days' time.

"But you can't send me away just yet, Matron," he expostulated. "My foot still pains me badly. The Germans are sure to catch me."

"I am very sorry for you," said Nurse Cavell, "but you'll have to go. You are demoralising my girls, and I feel uneasy about you going out so often at night."

Quien began to whimper. "You are sending me to my death," he said in a whining voice.

"Nonsense," replied Nurse Cavell. "You will be going with a party of sixteen men in charge of my best guide. Your risk is no greater than theirs, and if you really want to fight for your country you must go now. I have already had one visit from the German police, and I don't want another."

She went on to add that when he reached Holland he was to make his way to The Hague, and there report himself to the French military attaché, Colonel Desprez.

Quien went, but with a very bad grace. He found no difficulty in getting across the frontier, and on June 30 turned up at Colonel Desprez's office. The Colonel had no power to send him to France if he did not wish to go. The story that Quien told afterwards was that he had been requested to go back to Belgium to undertake espionage for the French Intelligence Service—a tale that was a complete fabrication. I have Colonel Desprez's own authority for stating that, beyond his reporting to him and then disappearing, he knew nothing about Quien.

The German secret police, in the persons of Bergan and Pinkhoff, had been entirely responsible for using

him as a decoy bird to unmask the secrets of the organisation that was known to be sending hundreds of men to join the Allied armies. They already knew that Nurse Cavell, as well as Prince and Princess de Croÿ, were the prime movers of the system, but before they made any arrests they were determined to get everybody.

Quien did not return to Brussels immediately. About the middle of July Nurse Cavell was astounded, as well as horrified, to receive a letter from him written from the prison at Antwerp, in which he said that he had been arrested while making his way back into Belgium. The mere fact of the letter being allowed to reach Nurse Cavell was in itself highly suspicious, because her correspondence was now being opened and her telephone wire tapped.

She was even more alarmed when, on July 29, this gaunt apparition of a man knocked at the door of her *clinique* and greeted her with all the warmth of an old friend.

"Well, here I am," he said affably, walking in without being invited.

"What are you doing in Brussels?" retorted Nurse Cavell.

"Ah, I've got something to tell you." He went into her office; she followed him in, afraid that their conversation might be overheard.

"I've been to The Hague," he began, "and seen our military attaché. He told me that I should be rendering my country much better service by doing Intelligence work. I told him I was no good for the infantry."

"I see," said Nurse Cavell shortly. "Whatever you are doing in Brussels, it is quite certain that you cannot come here. This place is being watched day and night, and I am expecting to be arrested at any moment."

Quien expressed great sorrow. "I'll look after you," he remarked ingratiatingly. "I've been put in touch with all our Secret Service agents and it won't be difficult to find out when the Germans are after you. In the meantime, Matron," he continued, "I wonder whether you could let me have fifty francs. I'll have some more money coming along shortly."

Anxious to get rid of him, Nurse Cavell gave him what he wanted, and saw him off the premises with feelings the reverse of pleasant. It was true, as she had said, that she was living in imminent fear of arrest. One can well imagine her disgust, then, when an hour or so later her unwelcome visitor turned up again, slightly the worse for drink. He bore a peace-offering, however—flowers and chocolates for the girls in the Home.

"You rascal!" exclaimed Nurse Cavell wrathfully. "I gave you money which I could ill-afford, and you waste it in this fashion. Go away, and don't come near this place again!"

But even then she did not suspect him of being a German spy. The poor woman, whose charitable nature made it impossible for her to think evil of anybody, merely sensed danger from his presence in Brussels as an Intelligence agent for the French. Had she known he was daily reporting to the heads of the

German secret police, her very heart would have stopped beating.

Quien asked her, before he would leave the *clinique*, for the address of Philippe Baucq, assuring her that they had important business together. She refused to give it to him, telling him curtly that Baucq wanted nothing to do with him.

"All right, Matron," he said. "Quite right not to trust me. I'll find it myself." It was nothing more than a petty trap for Nurse Cavell. Philippe Baucq's address was well known to Section "B" of the secret police; in the dossier there is a notification, signed by Bergan, which says: "It has been ascertained that a certain Baucq, an architect, resident in Brussels, Avenue de Rodebeek 49, is suspected of recruiting; this man is also strongly suspected of espionage."

Quien had learnt practically all there was to know about Baucq on his trip to Holland.

Only a short time was to elapse before the crash came. That same day Quien called upon the unsuspecting architect, told him his cleverly conceived story of having been sent back to Brussels to work for the French—with the addition of being instructed to assist fugitives to escape across the frontier—and had the satisfaction of learning much that would be of interest to his scoundrelly employers.

"I shall be having a visit from Mlle. Thuliez in a day or two," said Baucq. "The lady who brought you from Mons," he explained.

"I remember her well," answered Quien. One wonders whether in his black heart he felt some qualm

about betraying the woman who had treated him so kindly. If he did, his manner did not reveal it. All he remarked was : " I shall be glad to meet her again." Four years were to elapse before he could meet Mlle Thuliez again, and then, no doubt, the wish had disappeared.

He went away from Baucq's house with Madame Bodart's address, lulling any doubts Baucq may have felt about him by asking for a new identity card. Madame Bodart received him, the following day, with a good deal of doubt. He asked so many incriminating questions, spinning the same story that he had told Baucq, that she would say nothing without first consulting the architect. But even then, like Nurse Cavell, she did not realise that he was a decoy for the secret police.

Obviously the fruit was ripe for picking. Bergan must have realised that any further activity on the part of Quien might upset all his plans. He therefore issued orders for the arrests to begin. Pinkhoff, in company with two other officers, kept observation on Baucq's house throughout the night of July 31. About half-past eleven, secreted in dark doorways, they saw a woman enter the house.

They knew it was Mlle. Thuliez, and they waited some little time to see whether she came out again. An hour elapsed, and then Baucq emerged. Pinkhoff went up to him, introduced himself, and said he would like to have a talk with him.

The unfortunate Baucq told him he had better come inside. They had no sooner entered the door than Baucq began speaking very loudly with the intention

of raising the alarm. There was much scurrying upstairs and then, to the detective's great surprise, bundles of paper came fluttering from a window above. They rushed up, to find that it was the forbidden paper, *La Libre Belgique*, that was being thrown out with frantic haste by Madame Baucq and the woman who had entered the house an hour before.

Another hour and a half elapsed, marked by angry interrogation on the part of Pinkhoff. The mysterious woman gave her name as Mlle. Lejeune; and when Pinkhoff informed her that she, as well as Baucq, would be taken to the offices of the secret police in the rue de Berlaimont, the end of the organisation was in sight. It was 2.30 a.m. when they reached the headquarters of Section "B." They found Bergan awaiting them in a state of great glee over the successful results of the night's work.

The police were still in possession of Baucq's house the following morning when young Bodart and a boy named Constant Cayron arrived, blissfully ignorant of what had taken place. They had been engaged in the clandestine distribution of the *Libre Belgique*, and were stricken with fear when Pinkhoff unceremoniously hauled them off to the rue de Berlaimont to be interrogated.

Quien had certainly done his work well. Acting under German orders he now called at Madame Bodart's house, informed her that the game was up, and demanded to know whether she had any compromising documents which she wanted to get rid of.

Madame Bodart this time fell an easy victim to him. She handed him a bundle of papers, including five

maps which had been utilised by the guides. Quien said he would take them to an address which she gave him, and with a cunning which must have been used to keep himself free from suspicion, he partly kept his word. But some few weeks later Madame Bodart found herself confronted with one of the maps, as well as several of the papers she had entrusted to the traitor.

The Germans had plenty of use for him. They sent him on to Mons, to the house of a woman with whom Mlle. Thuliez had lodged. Here he also divulged the news of the arrest, adding: "I have a lot of influence with the German police. Let me have Mlle. Thuliez's correspondence, and she will be free in a week."

"I don't know what you are talking about," wisely retorted the lady, eyeing him as some unclean thing that had drifted in with the wind.

Quien was but one of the renegades engaged in trapping the conspirators. Another individual, whose part did not fully come to light until the war was over, was the lawyer's clerk Armand Jeannes, who had previously been employed by Libiez and in that capacity had come to know a great deal about the organisation; he also had fallen a victim to German gold.

Jeannes, possibly, was an even more black-hearted traitor than Quien. Under the *nom-de-guerre* of "Le Petit Belge," he worked under German direction in the Mons district, and primed his employers with a vast amount of information which in all probability led to the original arrests.

EDITH CAVELL

It was Jeannes, without a doubt, who was responsible for Mlle. Thuliez being followed to Baucq's house. However, as with Quien, retribution was to overtake him in due course.

## CHAPTER VI

IT WAS ABOUT FIVE O'CLOCK that fateful morning when Lieutenant Bergan, looking at the dawn that was slowly filtering through the windows, remarked to the indefatigable Pinkhoff: "That will do for the time being. Take them to St. Gilles, and see that they don't get a chance to talk to each other."

Then, as a man who had done a good night's work, he threw himself on a sofa in the adjoining room and slept the sleep of the just.

Nurse Cavell at the *clinique* heard the dire news of the arrests that had already taken place, and with characteristic philosophy quietly remarked: "I suppose it won't be long before they come for us." Every foreboding she had expressed during the preceding month had at last come true. Only a week or two previously she had met Capiou and Mlle. Thuliez at an obscure café in Brussels, to discuss the advisability of continuing any longer.

She was then completely worn out, and her nerves were at breaking-point. In the back room of the café the little party sat drinking a *café filiré*, and Nurse Cavell said with a sigh: "Well, it must happen some day. We can't go on indefinitely; that is quite certain."

Capiou interrupted her. "It isn't so much our own lives," he remarked quietly. "I am thinking of

all the poor folk associated with us. We cannot continue to involve them in death. We must try to go on alone."

"That is so," said Nurse Cavell. "But now that we have gone so far, let us carry on."

She did not know then—neither did Capiiau—how effectively Armand Jeannes had been carrying out his orders around Mons and Maubeuge. He was an amazing personality, this Jeannes, short in stature, with hypnotic blue eyes which gazed on his victims with unwavering brightness.

Libiez had dismissed him, and, after earning a precarious living when the Germans entered the town, he became a spy in the pay of that notorious bully, Captain von Kirchenheim, whose activities as chief of the Maubeuge police resulted in the death of hundreds of patriotic French and Belgian people.

Jeannes boasted one night when he was very drunk that he had sent no fewer than 126 men and women to their end. However, I can deal with "Le Petit Belge" more fully as I come to the end of this story; the retribution which overtook him and Quien is a fitting sequel to the tale of the crime that shook the world.

But, before Jeannes and Quien had done their foul work, Nurse Cavell had unconsciously given away many of her secrets. There had arrived at the *clinique* in the middle of May a suspicious-looking man who called himself Jacoby. His tale was that he had been captured on the eastern front, sent to a labour camp near Maubeuge, and from there made his escape into Brussels.

How did he know of Nurse Cavell ? It was a mystery he was reluctant to disclose ; Nurse Cavell questioned him closely enough, but could gain only the information that some unknown person had told him to apply to the rue de la Culture. So, much against her better judgment, she took him in, and kept him for ten days until a party of men was being sent to Holland.

Nobody heard or saw anything further of Jacoby until the following August. Then, strangely enough, he was found in St. Gilles prison with a story to account for his presence that he had been captured just as he was about to cross the frontier. There was no knowledge among the other captives of any such incident. Louis Gilles, who had acted as Jacoby's guide, had reported no such happening.

Many other things combined to make the people in the prison believe that Jacoby had been the first person to betray Nurse Cavell's part in the organisation. He was continually seen going in and out of the office where Bergan and Pinkhoff held their so-called courts. And, what was more remarkable, he began assuming airs of authority.

One day, however, he ran into trouble. He had just come out of the " court-house " when he collided in the corridor with a Belgian prisoner—a hefty fellow who had had his suspicions of Jacoby for some time.

" Where the devil are you going ? " shouted Jacoby.

" To the place where you have been," retorted the other man. " But not to denounce poor Nurse Cavell," he added.

" You lying dog," cried Jacoby furiously.

"Guard!" he called out to a German standing near-by.  
 "Put this man back in his cell."

The guard came over, leisurely enough and enquired what the trouble was. He growled at Jacoby, a Pole by nationality: "What do you mean by ordering me about?"

"What right has this man to go to the office?" demanded Jacoby.

"As much right as you," said the guard. "He has work to do in the prison. And it isn't to betray women," he added. Muttering a few other things under his breath, the German walked back to his post. He had no sooner turned his back than Jacoby made a leap at the Belgian, squealing with rage. There was a terrific rough-and-tumble for a few minutes watched with much interest by passing prisoners. Events of this sort were common enough in St. Gilles in those days. The Germans had taken over three-quarters of the prison and filled it with political suspects, keeping most of the Belgian gaolers—those who would consent to serve under them—but supervising them with their own guards.

Traitors were rampant, and the captives were aware of the fact. Occasionally one of them would be cornered, then there would be a fight which ended in a badly battered renegade being taken off to the hospital, and the assailant being hauled off to the punishment cells to undergo a week's bread and water.

To give the German guards their due they had just as little stomach for Pinkhoff's spies as had the prisoners. The man who had been called over by Jacoby took a long time to interfere in the fight;

eventually, as it was getting too noisy, he walked over drawing his truncheon. But, instead of striking the Belgian, he fetched the Pole a crack on the head which knocked all the fight out of him.

"Now, then," he said to the Belgian, "be off about your business, or you'll get us all into trouble."

Quien himself, when placed on his trial in 1919, always declared that it was Jacoby who had first betrayed Nurse Cavell and her organisation. When Jacoby's name was mentioned he sprang to his feet in the court and cried out: "Yes, that is the man. Everybody in St. Gilles knew he was the man who gave Nurse Cavell away."

As I say, many of the German officers heartily disliked the dirty work that was indulged in to condemn prisoners. Otto Mayer, hypocritical as he was, said one day to a Belgian who had been called to the office: "The fellow that sold us this information"—he was referring to the arrest of Baucq—"earned his money right enough."

"What is his name?" asked the Belgian.

"Quien," replied Mayer. "He's a filthy, repulsive beast."

"Ah, isn't that the fellow we all call 'Double-metre'?"

"Yes," said Mayer, "and one day, probably, he'll have to pay for it. I shouldn't like to be in his shoes after the war."

Prophetic words!

\* \* \* \* \*

These renegades were part and parcel of the secret police system in Brussels. One way and another,

fifty or sixty of them were known to be in German pay. Dressing them in priestly garb was a favourite ruse. They would be inserted into the cell of an obstreperous prisoner to play upon the piety which is such a strong characteristic of the Belgians.

"Confess, my son" or "my daughter," was what they urged. "Purge your sins by that open confession which alone can save you from the everlasting fires of Hell."

Perhaps it worked now and then, regardless of the fact that the Primate of Belgium, brave old Cardinal Mercier, was consistently inciting his clergy to foil the enemy with all the means in their power.

Nurse Cavell had no delusions that her sex would be the slightest protection once discovery came. She did not boast of what she had done, neither did she lie or plead for mercy when faced with her captors.

Poor Baucq ! He had been unforgivably careless in the way he had embarked on his mission of sending men over the frontier. Perhaps it was due to contempt, brought about by the ease with which he and other Brussels people had been hoodwinking the enemy ever since they had occupied the capital. But, as Pinkhoff industriously relates in the dossier, he had left plenty of evidence about—sufficient to forfeit his life a dozen times over.

"The suspicion of espionage," says Monsieur Henri—the name by which Pinkhoff was known to his victims—"was aroused by a letter which was found in Baucq's home. The letter is signed 'S.M.,' which might stand for 'service militaire.' Moreover," Pinkhoff goes on, "slips of paper were found

on which was noted an exact description of the route that is frequently taken by recruits. As the confidential person informs us"—he modestly omits to mention that this was Quien, who had visited Baucq a few days previously—"these notes might be connected with the recruiting which Baucq is also said to have carried on."

In Baucq's house the secret police found three incriminating letters from Nurse Cavell. They contained particulars of men waiting to be sent into Holland, and Baucq, despising or forgetting the possibilities of a police raid, had foolishly omitted to destroy them.

Pinkhoff seized upon them like a terrier, also the slip of paper which Mlle. Thuliez had brought from Mons. But, to Baucq's eternal credit, he disavowed all knowledge of the letters, as he did of transmitting intelligence concerning German munition trains leaving Cambrai—the information contained in the note signed "S.M."

Here it may be permissible to interpolate a note of explanation. When Quien was about to be court-martialled in Paris in 1919, the French Government, desirous of ascertaining the precise extent to which he had betrayed Nurse Cavell, succeeded in getting into touch with Otto Mayer, the ex-courier who had worked with Bergan. Mayer made a lengthy statement to the British Military Attaché in Holland, in the course of which he revealed that most of the evidence which had resulted in Nurse Cavell's arrest was found in Baucq's house.

Now Mayer was a mendacious little brute who would

tell any lie if it suited his purpose. In saying this he may have been grossly traducing poor Baucq's memory, for it was fairly obvious that Nurse Cavell was already under suspicion, even though actual evidence of her guilt may then have been lacking. In any case, neither Bergan nor Pinkhoff would have found it difficult, as time was soon to prove, to convict her out of her own mouth. She would scorn to lie.

Mayer himself seems to have thought that he had been badly misjudged. He was then employed as concierge at the Hotel Stéphanie in Baden-Baden, and he subsequently had the ineffable impertinence to write several letters to Princess de Croÿ attempting to borrow money from her. In these letters he talked of "that brute Bergan," and generally sought to give the impression that he was the unwilling tool of a double-dyed rascal.

Nevertheless, Baucq had undoubtedly been strangely careless about keeping in his house a mass of material which provided Bergan and Pinkhoff with all the evidence they wanted to bluff their victims.

How cleverly the pair had laid their plans speedily became manifest as soon as Baucq and Mlle. Thuliez were safely lodged behind the walls of St. Gilles. Their arch-spy Jeannes was waiting in Brussels; as soon as Bergan had satisfied himself about Capiou's complicity in the plot, Jeannes was taken off in a motor-car, accompanied by two men of the secret police, to arrest Capiou in Wasmès. It was the same day that Nurse Cavell was arrested at the *clinique*.

Mlle. Thuliez, bravely endeavouring to withstand the merciless brow-beating to which she was subjected

on the second day of her capture, had already been confronted with "Le Petit Belge." He had been brought into the room used as a courthouse, there to find the Lille schoolmistress sitting down facing four German policemen.

"Do you know this man?" asked Pinkhoff with his maddening sneer. Mlle. Thuliez preserved her sang-froid; it was with perfect self-possession that she replied: "I have never seen him before in my life."

"Oh yes, you have," retorted Jeannes just as assuredly. "You saw me in Mons only a few days ago. You have often seen me."

They had a few heated words, Mlle. Thuliez being a lady of spirit, until Pinkhoff interjected: "All right, you needn't squabble over the matter. It isn't very important one way or the other."

He could well afford not to bother about trifles now. Thanks to Quen he knew so much about the leaders of the organisation that it was only a question of time before he had them all in his power.

Prince de Croÿ at Bellignies heard of the arrests in Brussels. Hastily bidding his sister farewell, he journeyed into the capital to warn everybody with whom he had been connected that the secret police were rounding up all suspects. Dozens of people who had been giving sanctuary to Allied soldiers, many of them poor lodging-house keepers, were in total ignorance of the ominous events now taking place. There was little or no time to lose. Calling at the house of Madame Bodart, the Irish-born widow who had risked her life a hundred times in hiding the stragglers, the Prince mentioned that he must leave

there to warn a batch of men waiting in a house near the Midi station. Madame Bodart offered to go herself so that the Prince might get back to Bellignies.

\* \* \* \* \*

Humour did not obtrude itself a great deal in this rather grim affair. But one may be permitted to relate a piquant little episode that took place just before the arrest of Madame Bodart.

The lodging-house which she kept in the rue Taciturne had been raided by the German police with striking non-success. Madame Bodart had already cleared her men safely out of the way, leaving nothing for the Germans but a pair of trousers hanging on a peg in the hall. Careless, no doubt, but excusable in the panic.

"So!" cried one of the Huns, pulling the trousers down. "You have no men here, madame?"

Not for nothing had Madame Bodart been struggling for a living in Brussels a good many years.

"Ah!" she said mournfully. "Yes, it is all that is left of my poor dear husband."

The Germans knew her to be a widow, apart from the fact that she was still wearing widow's weeds, as is customary in Belgium. They also knew perfectly well that she had been harbouring men; but, as none were to be found, they stamped out of the house, warning her, by all she held holy, not to get up to any more tricks.

As soon as they were safely out of the way she set off to the house close to the Gare du Midi where the men mentioned by Prince de Croÿ were anxiously awaiting further orders.

She knocked at the door, and then nearly dropped dead, for who should open it but the identical German policeman who had raided her in the rue Taciturne !

"*Ach !*" he shouted gleefully. "If it isn't the Merry Widow again ! And, pray, what have you done with the trousers this time ?"

He dragged Madame Bodart inside, and after indulging in that process which is vulgarly described as "skull-dragging," packed her off to the rue de Berlaimont, where his superior, Pinkhoff, would be able to carry on the good work.

\* \* \* \* \*

Séverin, the venerable, long-bearded chemist who had had many business dealings with Nurse Cavell, quite apart from recruiting, was pounced upon, as were Libiez, the lawyer, and Derveau, the apothecary. Then it was the turn of little Auguste Joly, who had hidden Private Stanton. With Joly the Germans took the big woman, Louise Ladriere-Tellier, who had been acting as a professional conductor of stragglers, and who was fated to come to a tragic end after the war. In the welter of recrimination and accusation which arose when the Belgian people were trying to unmask traitors this woman poisoned herself on the eve of being arrested for high treason.

On August 17, Georges Hostelet, the man who had vainly warned Nurse Cavell, fell into Bergan's hands. Following this came another batch of arrests of men and women who had been helping Capiiau and Libiez in the Mons district. Then Jeannes made his reappearance on the scene, this time at the Château of the

frail Countess de Belleville, a warm friend of Princess de Croÿ who had been taking a few soldiers into Brussels and handing them over to Nurse Cavell.

The Princess actually saw her friend going past Bellignies, seated in a motor-car with an escort of German soldiers. Hardly knowing what to do for a moment, she was agitatedly waiting in her drawing-room, asking herself if it could be true, when some of the people from the village came running in the château gates breathless with the news that it was indeed the Countess who had been taken prisoner.

Courageously ignoring the risk she was running, the Princess and her grandmother, Mrs. Parnell, drove over to Montigny, the de Belleville residence, to offer what consolation they could to the aged mother of the Countess. When they got back to Bellignies a further shock awaited them.

## CHAPTER VII

NURSE CAVELL WAS IN A TRAP, and she knew it. Despite the veil of silence which the secret police drew over their work, she had heard all about the arrest of Baucq and Mlle. Thuliez ; it was now merely a question of watching and waiting.

She did not dare move outside the *clinique*, realising that spies would track her down wherever she went. To telephone was equally dangerous, and as for escape, where could she make for ? Four days of almost unendurable suspense passed by, days which she devoted to destroying everything in the place which might compromise anybody connected with the organisation.

Outwardly she maintained a cheerful demeanour, if only to encourage the little probationers, who gazed at her with pitying and wondrous eyes—marvelling that a woman with death hanging over her could still go about her everyday tasks with so much apparent unconcern.

On August 5, shortly after the mid-day meal had been cleared off, the blow fell. Two motor-cars drew up outside the *clinique* ; from the first car there stepped three men. One of them Nurse Cavell knew—Mayer ; she could guess who one of the others was from the purple birthmark which all Brussels talked about. It was the formidable Pinkhoff.

A badly frightened nurse admitted them to the office where Nurse Cavell dignifiedly awaited them.

"What can I do for you?" asked Nurse Cavell in French, addressing Pinkhoff.

That gentleman had already cast a sharp glance round. Without replying at once, he rapped out to Mayer: "Get hold of the other one"—referring to Sister Wilkins.

"Now, Miss Cavell," he began when Mayer had disappeared, "I think it is high time you and I understood each other a little better."

Nurse Cavell calmly replied: "Why?"

"You are aware, I suppose," Pinkhoff continued, "that we have been engaged in running down the people who are sending able-bodied men out of the country to fight?"

Very fond of this phrase "able-bodied men" were the German police; it is to be found all through the dossier; it was the trump card for the War Councils, with all its implication of mobilisable men to be used against Germany.

"You cannot expect me to know your business," was Nurse Cavell's retort to Pinkhoff's question. She would not lie, but, on the other hand, she meant to admit nothing.

Into Pinkhoff's eyes came that malicious gleam which all his victims knew so well. "It would be just as well for you, Miss Cavell," he said softly, "if you told me the truth. You know as well as I do that your friend Philippe Baucq has been arrested, and the woman Thuliez. They have both admitted their complicity, and inculcated you to

such a degree that your only hope now is to tell the truth."

Nurse Cavell, calm as ever, never turned a hair. She fenced and parried with him until his suavity turned to a violent outburst of temper. The friendly manner changed into a bawling, bullying examination which could be heard all over the *clinique*. The terrified probationers listened with quaking hearts; Sister Wilkins, all the time Mayer was questioning her, strained her ears to hear what was taking place.

Comparative quiet suddenly came. Pinkhoff was now busily engaged in ransacking Nurse Cavell's bureau, with results, to judge from his muttered exclamations, which were somewhat barren. In another room Otto Mayer was industriously doing the same thing.

Then came another bout of interrogation. This inquisitive German had endless questions to ask. One, two, three hours passed, and still he remained.

Sister Wilkins was sent for. She found Nurse Cavell quite unperturbed. More questions were fired at them; then Mayer, in English, said to them: "You are both under arrest. We are going to take you to the police office in the rue de Berlaimont, where you will be further interrogated."

Nurse Cavell turned to Pinkhoff. "You have no objection to my taking a few of my belongings?"

"No," said Pinkhoff ironically. "It is more than possible that we shall be keeping you some little time. There are many things you can tell us."

Dozens of the probationers, their heads hanging out of the windows, saw the unhappy women shep-

herded into the waiting cars and driven off. Right opposite the *clinique*, though the Germans didn't know it, was Prince de Croÿ, also watching the drama.

\* \* \* \*

They drove up to the rue de Berlaimont, a small side street flanked by dingy-looking buildings close by the Cathedral of St. Gudule. Here they were separated, Nurse Cavell being taken to the room of the dreaded Lieutenant Bergan, while Sister Wilkins found herself under the care of the triumphant Mayer.

The dossier does not actually record what occurred between Nurse Cavell and Bergan on this occasion; he spoke no French nor English, and in all probability their conversation was recorded by a clerk who translated for them. Nearly all these interrogations, be it noted, took place in such circumstances, but were recorded in German, which doubtless gave Bergan and Pinkhoff unlimited opportunities for twisting statements to their liking.

It was three days, as the dossier sets out, before Nurse Cavell underwent a formal *questionnaire* in the prison of St. Gilles, with Pinkhoff present—the first of many such ordeals—and made recorded replies to the charges of conducting “able-bodied men” to the enemy.

Sister Wilkins, to her vast surprise and relief, found that she would be permitted to return to the *clinique*. In sending her off Mayer uttered a ferocious warning. “Go home while you are safe. You are not to move out of doors, and, to make sure you don't, we are going to lock you in of a night.”

Bewildered but thankful, the Sister made her way back to the rue de la Culture, to be bombarded by a fluttering crowd of probationers. What would happen next was in the lap of the gods. She had thoughts of trying to escape while there was time, but abandoned the idea for what it might bring in its train.

\* \* \* \* \*

Late that evening Nurse Cavell was removed in a motor-car to the prison of St. Gilles, already inhabited by hundreds of so-called political captives.

She was placed in a cell in one of the left-hand wings of the great star-shaped gaol—quite a comfortable one, all things considered, and possessing the inestimable benefit of not having to be shared with another unfortunate.

Nothing had disturbed her extraordinary calm; whatever perturbation she must have felt was successfully hidden. She wrote a letter to a girl at the *clinique* in whom she felt a special interest, which reveals the unselfishness of her nature as nothing else can :

My dearest Gracie,

I do hope you are not worrying about me. Tell everybody I am quite all right here. I suppose from what I hear I shall be questioned one of these days, and when they have all they desire I shall know what they mean to do with me. We are numerous here and there is no chance of being lonely.

We can buy food at the canteen, but I should be glad to have one of our red blankets, a serviette, cup, fork and spoon, and plate—not best ones; also one or two towels and my tooth-brush, a tea-cloth and my cuffs. In a day or two some clean linen.

I am afraid you will not be able to come and see me at present, but you can write ; only your letter will be read. Is Sister Wilkins free ? I have been thinking of her ever since last night. Tell them to go on with the move as before. If Sister is there she will know how to arrange everything. Your letter is in my money drawer.

Is Jackie [her dog] sad ? Tell him I will be back soon.

The day is rather long. Can you send me a book and a little embroidery ; also some nail-scissors ? Only a very few things, as I have no place to put them. . . . I will write again when there is anything to tell. Don't, don't worry. We must hope for the best. Tell them to go on as usual.—Yours,

E. CAVELL.

It was two days after this letter that she was formally interrogated by Bergan and Pinkhoff in the room used by the Director of St. Gilles, a small apartment, lined with stained pitch-pine, which was to witness many heartbreaking scenes of a similar kind before freedom came back to Brussels.

Only the two Germans were present, with the inevitable clerk to make shorthand notes of everything asked and the answers. When the notes had been transcribed in German the prisoner was invited to sign them. The wise ones uncompromisingly refused, and demanded that they be written in French. But many a poor captive, haunted day and night by fear of the unknown, put his or her name to documents which were to prove a death-warrant.

Nurse Cavell had been in St. Gilles a few days when Sister Wilkins succeeded in inducing Otto Mayer to allow her a visit. However, they could not talk alone ; Mayer remained in the room, explaining to the Sister that she might possibly try to hand over some poison.

"And that," said Mayer carefully, "would get me into terrible trouble, as well as you." So he stood by listening to everything, apparently sympathetic and doubtless not in the least proud of himself.

To the Sister's query as to whether she would like some food brought in, Nurse Cavell gently replied: "No, no. I'll have what everyone else has. If you like you can send me in something special for Sunday, but nothing else."

She was not ill-treated; far from it, and any stories to that effect are completely devoid of foundation. The prisoners who incurred the full blast of German venom were those who refused to confess; as far as Nurse Cavell was concerned she soon realised that enough had already been admitted by other captives to make her case hopeless.

\* \* \* \* \*

British affairs in Belgium were then in the charge of the United States Legation. The American Minister, Mr. Brand Whitlock, a novelist by profession, and continually at loggerheads with the "occupant" over his outrageous methods, was notified of Nurse Cavell's incarceration, and communicated with the Prussian Baron Oscar von der Lancken, asking to be informed of the circumstances.

He received no reply for the time being. In pursuance of the policy of silence maintained by the secret police, not alone in this but in nearly every other case, no information could be obtained. Prisoners just disappeared into St. Gilles, and no one was permitted to learn the charges against them.

## EDITH CAVELL

Mr. Brand Whitlock did not realise then how serious Nurse Cavell's position was. So far the Germans had refrained from shooting any of their political prisoners in Brussels, and, as Nurse Cavell's case was not one of espionage, the American Minister forbore to stir up trouble for the time being.

## CHAPTER VIII

UNENVIABLE INDEED WAS THE PLIGHT of Princess de Croÿ. She was sitting in the garden with her grandmother, only an hour or so after returning from Montigny, when the housekeeper came out with the disquieting information that a strange man wanted to speak to her.

"Who is he?" asked the Princess, all her forebodings of evil coming over her again.

"I think he is a German, Madame," replied the woman, "and I'm sure he is a spy."

Prince de Croÿ was still away; there was nothing the Princess could do but face the music. She went indoors, to find awaiting her a man in shabby clothes, whose very accent proclaimed his German origin. But it was in extremely good English that he introduced himself as an escaped English soldier! Had the Princess herself not had English blood in her veins and spoken our language with no intonation whatever, she might easily have been trapped by this cunning spy—for German agent he was.

With true Teutonic love of routine he opened up with the old, old story, the one with which they were always trying to trap the American Legation.

"Your Highness," this one began, "I am an Englishman who has been hiding in Brussels for a long time. But it is now getting too dangerous there.

The Abbé — has told me that you are helping men to reach Holland and rejoin their regiments."

What could the Princess do? It *was* a trap without a doubt; in the man's accent there was just that faint trace of the guttural which no German succeeds in losing. However, she felt it to be useless to quarrel with the unwelcome intruder. With perfect self-possession she said, quite sympathetically: "Much better that you should have remained in Brussels. It is impossible to send anybody away from here. You will be well advised to give yourself up."

Across the man's face there flitted a faint look—sardonic amusement possibly. Then the Princess knew she was right—German spy. But the fellow went on talking, vainly attempting to persuade her that he was a *bona fide* British soldier. The Princess got rid of him at last, although she was fated to see him again. When the time came for the court-martial of Nurse Cavell and her fellow-heroes, there was the spy in police uniform—Otto Mayer, the one-time courier of London.

The hue and cry for the Prince was getting stronger and stronger. Bergan's superiors, judging by the desperate measures now being adopted by the secret police, were straining all their resources and utilising every conceivable ruse to lay him by the heels. The interrogations directed at the prisoners in St. Gilles had definitely established his supremacy as an organiser.

It was not for want of identification that he could not be found. On a previous search of Bellignies the German police had taken away a snapshot of the Prince

standing at the back of a group of people. Industrious "Monsieur Henri" had Nurse Cavell out from her cell one morning.

"Is this Prince de Croÿ?" he enquired, pointing to the photograph. Nurse Cavell said it was; no useful purpose would have been served by saying otherwise.

Mlle. Thuliez was brought in. "Monsieur Henri" asked her the same question; Mlle. Thuliez said she certainly recognised the Prince. Hermann Capiau was asked as well; he could not deny the likeness. But all this painstaking procedure didn't unearth the Prince. Pinkhoff circulated the photograph to every *Kommandantur* in Belgium, with the instruction that the original should be arrested forthwith.

They ransacked Bellignies from top to bottom, bullied the Princess, bawled at the château retainers, and arrested a gamekeeper who protested that he did not know where his master was.

And the Prince was in Brussels all the time, staying at the house of a friend. He was not taking the pursuit too seriously as yet, until one morning a message smuggled out of St. Gilles from the indomitable Baucq—the prisoners had ways and means of communicating with the outside world—warned him that the Germans had dragged out of several members of the band information which would probably cost him his life if he did not flee forthwith.

The Prince might have ignored the ominous tidings had he not chanced, on looking out of the window, to see in the street outside the man who was now known

to be a spy in the pay of the secret police—no less a person than Quien.

Quien ! The man whose visit to Baucq had been followed by the first arrest ; whose call upon Madame Bodart had coincided with the police-filled house at the Gare du Midi ! Somebody was in possession of all their secrets. The Prince hesitated no longer.

For the time being he took refuge in a hospital a few miles out of the city. Unfortunately there was a German officer's wife—the Belgians having to house such people whether they liked it or not—undergoing treatment in the place, and she was not so ill that she could not take some interest in the mysterious gentleman who never went out by day. So the Prince moved on to a quiet little house in Brussels where no questions would be asked. For the time being he was safe ; getting across the frontier would be a matter of waiting until the heavily guarded roads were a little clearer.

Panic had seized upon the Germans ; they were visualising the possibility of the entire population of Belgium taking up arms against them. The military gentlemen in Berlin were prodding the military gentlemen in Brussels with stinging remarks about their ineptitude ; hundreds of men, they said, were escaping over the frontier and swelling the Allied armies. It was not altogether true, just then. Temporarily the recruiting was at a standstill : guides wouldn't undertake the journeys, and without them nothing could be done.

Bergan and Pinkhoff had done well enough—but they still wanted the man they all called Reginald.

They sent a special body of men to trawl the deep waters of intrigue that lay around Mons. No sign of the fish there. Then they paid another visit to Bellignies, and nearly surprised the Princess with a bundle of false identity cards in her hand. Nearly, but not quite ; with no more than a few seconds to make up her mind, the nimble-witted lady thrust the cards underneath the cushions where her two dogs lay in a basket.

Custom makes slaves of us all ; the two animals, one a fox-terrier and the other a pomeranian, had grown so accustomed to loud-voiced German visitors that they invariably retired to their basket and lay there, with one eye open, until the coast was clear. This was a raid *de luxe*, conducted by the much-feared Captain von Kirchenheim, chief of the Maubeuge police. Rampaging and roaring his way from top to bottom, he found nothing incriminating, if one excepts the letter which Prince de Croÿ had received from Mr. Brand Whitlock, the American minister in Brussels, thanking him on behalf of the British Government for the services he had rendered to our soldiers. The original of the letter is in the dossier and reads as follows :

*American Legation,  
Brussels.  
21st April 1915.*

Monseigneur,

I have just received from my colleague, the Ambassador of the United States in London, the copy of a note which has been addressed to him by Sir Edward Grey, asking him to transmit to you the thanks of the British Government of His Majesty for the kindness which you have shown in transmitting to us the list of the officers and English

soldiers deceased in the Red Cross ambulances in France, and of those who are wounded and prisoners.

It is a very great pleasure for me to transmit to you this communication, and I remain,

Yours, etc.

(signed) BRAND WHITLOCK.

To Monseigneur le Prince de Croy,  
Mons.

While the intruders were combing the rooms the Princess came down into the hall to find another man—dressed as an officer—evidently waiting to speak to her alone. He, too, was a spy, but his accent was the Walloon French of the district.

“Don’t you think it would be as well, Princess,” he said ingratiatingly, “if you gave us all the assistance in your power? You know as well as I do that the organisation is entirely broken up. Tell us where your brother is; it will be much better for you in the long run.”

Scornfully the Princess looked the traitor up and down. She did not know him then; it was four years afterwards, in the court-house at Mons, that she recognised in the Armand Jeannes then being tried for his life the man who had spoken to her in the hall at Bellignies.

She asked her adviser if he thought that she and her brother had committed any crime of which they should be ashamed. He had no answer to that pertinent query; all he could do was say quietly with an air of great contrition: “Please take some good advice, Princess. It will be better for you to go while there is yet time.”

But in matters of this sort women are a law unto

themselves. The Princess had her aged grandmother to think of, as well as the fact that she was now the only member of the de Croÿ family who could safeguard the château. So she stayed on, keeping a cheerful face despite the unnerving realisation that it could now be nothing more than a matter of days before she, too, was called for.

If they could not have the Prince, then they would certainly have his sister. On September 4, therefore, instructions were issued in Brussels that she should be taken into custody. I have the original in the dossier, a copy of which is appended :

Mons.

Brussels, 4th Sept. 1915.

Police-station "B," Brussels,  
General-Government in Belgium.

### COMMUNIQUE

In the enquiry case against Baucq and associates, the sister of the wanted Prince Reginald de Croÿ, residing in the castle in Bellignies, is accused of assisting in the conducting of troops to the enemy and also of fabricating photographs which served for the drawing-up of forged identity cards for about 60 English and French stragglers.

Further particulars of the accusations made against the Princess follow in the enclosed responsible hearing of the co-accused. . . .

Handed over by Section "V" of the  
Central Police Office  
Brussels,

with the request for a decision as to the proposed searching of the castle in Bellignies and the possible arrest of the Princess Marie de Croÿ. It is requested that the Princess should be barred from receiving a passport.

(signed) BERGAN  
Lieutenant.

EDITH CAVELL

URGENT Brussels 4.9.15.

Lieutenant Bergan—Pol. St. B. Brussels.  
for an explanation (exact ! ! ) for the police-bureau in  
Maubeuge, which is to undertake the arrest and  
searching of the castle.

With the request for immediate telegraphic communication regarding the matter in hand and a detailed report as soon as possible.

Captain Joel (head of all the police in Brussels) has declared himself in agreement.

(signed) ADOLPH,  
*First Lieutenant.*

Either Bergan mistrusted his colleague von Kirchenheim, or he wanted all the glory himself. One does not know for certain ; but it is undeniable that early on the morning of September 6 he arrived at Bellignies himself, accompanied by his faithful satellite, " Monsieur Henri."

The Princess and her grandmother came down to meet their unwelcome visitors. Pinkhoff, urbane and specious as ever, apologised for calling at such an unusual hour, and said he would like to question her about the report that an enemy aeroplane had landed somewhere in the neighbourhood and that its occupants were supposed to be in hiding.

" Well," remarked the Princess sarcastically, " they are not hidden here, neither is the aeroplane. Perhaps you would like to search the house."

" No," said Pinkhoff, " we hardly thought so. But I am very much afraid, Princess, that we shall have to ask you to come with us. The matter is causing some little stir in Brussels."

He added that she would not be away more than a

few hours. There was a pathetic scene in the hall. The aged Mrs. Parnell, whose health had been suffering badly under the terrible strain of the past twelve months, asked the two policemen if they were telling the truth.

"We swear it on our honour," they answered without a blush. But it was over three years before the Princess saw Bellignies again! She bade her poor grandmother good-bye, and while she was in Brussels awaiting trial heard that the old lady had passed away.

A motor-car was waiting outside. Hastily packing a little clothing, the Princess was taken to the railway station, and thence to the capital, with Pinkhoff incessantly asking questions. If he did not win the battle of wits it was not his fault. Time after time did he repeat that all her fellow-workers had confessed; that Nurse Cavell had admitted receiving large sums of money from her, and that it now devolved upon her to tell the truth.

When the Princess said she knew nothing he waxed indignant; it pained him to think that she would not look upon him as her Father-confessor. If there was one thing a good patriot should do to stand well in the esteem of "Monsieur Henri" it was to tell the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth.

So he was none too affable when Brussels was reached at last—neither was Bergan. They took their captive off to the *Kommandantur* and locked her up for the night, the prey to feelings that can easily be imagined.

## CHAPTER IX

AS THIS STORY PLAINLY REVEALS, all ordinary conceptions of justice disappeared from Belgium once the Germans had come to the conclusion that the people could not be appeased.

It is true that the Belgian courts functioned after a fashion; the "occupant" had no objections to the national judiciary dealing with the everyday type of criminal. What he naturally reserved for himself was the right to deal as he pleased with political offenders—those involved in espionage, recruiting, and propaganda.

In Brussels itself there had been but one important case of espionage up to the time of *l'affaire Cavell*—that of Franck and Baekalmans, who even then were lying in St. Gilles under sentence of death. So far, however, the secret police, with all their *agents-provocateurs* and spies, had been singularly unsuccessful in running down the numerous Allied Intelligence services operating in their midst.

In Liège, it is true, they had managed to catch many Allied agents; but these were people carelessly employed by the French *service militaire* to watch German troop movements, with no proper organisation and certainly not sufficient funds—the latter an indispensable factor in espionage.

Brussels itself fairly reeked with surreptitious Allied

activity, until the exasperated Governor-General, goaded by Berlin after the bombing of the Zeppelin sheds just outside the capital, sent for Captain Joel, the head of all the police, and warned him that if he valued his job he must break up these hidden foes who were playing such havoc with his precious administration.

Who can wonder, then, that the secret police were ready to play any abominable trick on captives that came their way? After all, it was only a continuance of the ordinary German criminal procedure.

This, from the dossier of the Cavell case, is a choice sample of their work :

I recognise with absolute certainty in the female person with whom I have just been confronted the lady who in the second half of May, 1915, was introduced to me in my house by a certain Miss Cavell, the directress of the Berkendael *clinique* in Brussels. As she told me, she brought secretly to Brussels with her able-bodied Frenchmen whom she lodged at my house, sometimes at Miss Cavell's Home, and also at various other places in the town. . . . Miss Cavell had already informed that this lady was engaged in recruiting for the enemy army.

Following this damning disclosure, the "female person" was naturally brought in, to ask what *she* had to say to the above. Her attitude was what might have been expected; she retorted by promptly "splitting" on the lady who had given her away. So the evidence was gradually built up.

These two women between them did more damage than all the other prisoners put together; they were ready to incriminate each other in a way that must

have made the malicious Pinkhoff chuckle with delight.

Occasionally Pinkhoff and Bergan would quietly visit one of the cells, usually at night, and have a heart-to-heart talk with one of these accommodating ladies. It fell to my lot, in the compilation of this story, to make the acquaintance of a Belgian gaoler who was employed in St. Gilles; he gave accounts of these nocturnal conferences which would make strange reading if printed.

In the "file" you get a glimpse of what was taking place :

In a letter of 1st September, the accused . . . requests another hearing in the case. She now wishes to tell everything that she knows.

So there is another confession, which gives many particulars of how the stragglers were handed over to the guides, the meeting-place, and the route that was taken.

No trick was too despicable, no ruse beneath contempt for Bergan and Pinkhoff. In their unceasing quest for traitors who might be utilised as spies and "stool-pigeons" they came across a young Belgian—with German blood in his veins, be it said—who consented to play traitor.

Neels-Rhode was his name. Shortly after Nurse Cavell and Philippe Baucq had been executed he was tracked down in dramatic circumstances and shot dead by a Brussels waiter who courageously paid with his own life for removing the man whom the Germans put into Baucq's cell as a "stool-pigeon." With amazing

carelessness the police left in the dossier this record of the transaction :

*Brussels 27th September 1915.*

Incidental to the examination in the pending enquiry against Baucq and associates . . . a much-proved confidential agent was inserted, with his consent, in the military prison of St.-Gilles in the cell of the chief accused Baucq on 15th September 1915, from 9 a.m. to 4.30 p.m.

*[The confidential agent described his meeting with Baucq in the following manner :]*

I told Baucq that a house-search had taken place in my home that morning at 7 o'clock, and that I had been arrested because various Numbers of the *Times*, French newspapers, and also *La Libre Belgique*, had been found in my home. Baucq told me in the first place not to confess anything at all on any account ; that he had already defied the German authorities for forty-seven days and denied everything even when confronted with witnesses.

Baucq was in oral as well as written communication with his neighbouring cell inmate, using that point in the cell where the heating pipe led into the wall. Before my eyes Baucq conveyed a piece of paper to his neighbour in the next-door cell through this spot. . . . He also told me that he had been occupying himself with espionage with success, and watched those Belgians in particular who were in the German police service. . . . He had marked on ordnance maps the exact favourable points at which to cross into Holland, and had often conducted young men personally to the Dutch frontier.

*(signed)* BERGAN,  
*Lieutenant.*

Who could wonder, then, that Bergan was now in a position to present a case that no lawyer in the world could successfully fight ? By the time that he made his report to General von Sauberzweig he was lacking only the Prince de Croÿ to be able to say : " I have hem all."

By the end of September he had made over a hundred arrests; all the prisoners, with the exception of Princess de Croÿ, who was kept at the *Kommandantur*, were in St. Gilles. Daily there took place in the director's room interrogations of the people who had been brought in, most of them only too anxious to tell all they knew to save their lives. Fear was the real policeman. Pinkhoff had only to mention the possibility of a death penalty to achieve the results he wanted.

\*            \*            \*            \*            \*

It would require the pen of a Zola to depict the countless tragic scenes that took place behind the sombre red-brick walls of St. Gilles prison during the progress of *l'affaire Cavell*.

Almost daily there arrived humble little folk from the Mons district, paralysed at the suddenness with which they had fallen into the maw of the hated Boche. They found themselves thrust into a dark cell, these ignorant miners, seamstresses, market-women, peasants, wondering if this was the end of all things for them. What had at first seemed to be nothing more than exciting adventure had now become a numbing fear.

Who will ever know the truth of these terrible cases, which went on with bloodthirsty regularity all through 1915-16-17? The Germans themselves, with every good reason, have been ominously silent about them. Once they had imported their battalions of spies and *agents provocateurs* into Brussels they dragged their victims by the thousand first into the *Kommandantur*, and then to St. Gilles, until the impartial onlooker

began to wonder whether time had not slipped back a thousand years.

It was a fortunate prisoner who left St. Gilles in a few weeks or a few months. Many went out of its gates in that sinister black van which delivered its human cargo at the execution ground of the Tir National ; almost daily there were dozens of men and women transported to German convict prisons, where they died like flies.

Poor tear-stained faces peeped out of the trap-doors of the cells ; their owners waited from day to day, wondering when they would be summoned to attend that travesty of a court held daily within the jail walls, a court whose only purpose was to extort confessions. It required an indomitable will to stand up against the iniquitous system of bullying, badgering, and even torture that was practised to make the police cases complete.

So perhaps Nurse Cavell was right when she declined to lie ; when the time came for her first interrogation, Bergan and Pinkhoff, thanks to their spies, and even more strongly to the admissions they had already extracted from other prisoners, were in a position to know practically all there was to know about her organisation.

There had been a dramatic scene at this so-called court on the morning of August 8, an hour or two before Nurse Cavell was brought in to be questioned. Philippe Baucq, the architect, the first person to be arrested, had made his appearance before Bergan and Pinkhoff, the latter, as usual, conducting the examination. " Monsieur Henri " was in one of his evil

moods; he had just been told that Baucq's fighting spirit remained unconquered.

"Now then, M. Baucq," he began, "your case is a very grave one. We have incontestable proof that you have been carrying on espionage and recruiting. The evidence found in your house is very incriminating; in your own interests it would be better for you to confess, for a non-confessed crime is liable to a doubly serious punishment."

Baucq smiled contemptuously. "I am sorry, messieurs, that I am unable to say anything. But I must energetically protest against the accusation. . . . I have never carried on espionage, nor recruiting."

"You liar, you dirty liar," shouted Pinkhoff.

Baucq, his hands in his pockets, continued to smile, which roused Pinkhoff to further bursts of fury.

"Do you know the Prince de Croÿ?" (proof that he was arrested or suspected).

"Yes."

"How did you know him?"

"Through being commissioned by Monseigneur to carry out some work."

"How is it that you are in possession of his visiting card?"

"It was given me one day when Monseigneur came to my house."

But Baucq, unnerved by these personal questions, declared:

"I must remind you that on principle I will never answer any questions which might compromise a third party."

"Monsieur Baucq," snarled Pinkhoff, "take your

hands out of your pockets. You seem to forget that you are an accused person."

After a further half-hour of this "third degree," he was ordered back to his cell. He felt comparatively content, having in his head the idea that he had kept the enemy at bay. But, alas! he was soon to be undeceived. The Belgian gaoler who brought his mid-day meal furtively whispered to him that Nurse Cavell and a great number of other people were already locked up in the prison.

A man of fine character was Baucq; it has always been a matter of considerable discussion among the Belgian people that his courageous bearing when confronted with the despicable methods of incrimination adopted by the German secret police, and the death penalty which he had to pay for defying them, has never received, outside his own country, the appreciation it deserves.

I have read many of the letters which he succeeded in causing to be smuggled out of St. Gilles. There were numberless ways and means by which the German guards could be outwitted. Crude secret inks were employed; the regular prison staff pluckily assisted the captives, at the risk of their own liberty, in taking letters outside.

In one of these letters Baucq graphically described the sensations that possessed him when he found himself thrust into a cell.

For a short time, he wrote to his wife, I found myself lying on my bed, my eyes plunged into darkness; then I heard a noise coming from the passage, soon followed by tears and sobs. . . . I sat up in order to

listen more carefully, and recognised feminine voices. It must be a woman accompanied by her children whom they were shutting up in a cell. Those sobs beat against my heart as though to bruise it, and filled my being with a feeling of rebellion. I pitied those good patriots; my nerves trembled, a kind of fury overcame me, I wanted to hurl myself into the corridor in order to go to the defence of those poor creatures, I wanted to protect them with my very throat. Alas! . . . Then I listened again attentively.

I believed that I heard the voices of my wife and my children. What an obsession! . . . Would they dare imprison them? Oh, always the same, same answer; the doubt, the horrible uncertainty . . . it is terrible.

Two days later, frantic with anxiety, he sent another heartrending letter. It was Madame Baucq's birthday, and the tormented man wrote this:

Instead of receiving flowers and good wishes, you will be thinking of the absent one, you will be alone with desolation in your soul, my dear Maria! Do not let us be weighed down. Time! Time! That is the great healer! Hope, that precious flower, will bring us better days. Oh yes! The children and I will certainly once again have the opportunity of joyously celebrating this fête often. Later we shall regain the hours which have passed; the bouquets of flowers will seem more beautiful, and the good wishes will be more sincere; for in adversity we have learned to know better the riches of our hearts, we have learned to love each other better. Filled with tenderness, a smile on my lips, I send you my biggest kisses, and quite simply, from the bottom of my heart I say to you: "A happy fête, my dear Maria."

One can visualise him, in the grim solitude of his cell, the prey to feelings which tormented him day and night.

This morning, with my elbows on the table, my head between my hands, I thought of you, my dear children. . . . I can hear the noise of trucks running over the paving-stones of the road; out there, not far away, only a few steps away, is activity, joy, liberty. . . . The rays of the sun burst forth and fling out a pale and ephemeral jet of gold. The space widens, and the blue sky appears in all its splendour. It is a sky which the prisoner contemplates with wide open eyes and which sows in his heart divine hope. It is a sky, calm and pure as the water of a lake which nothing ruffles or disturbs, which fills you with a sweet serenity; it is a sky where peace is resplendent, where angels live, where God resides.

\* \* \* \* \*

Any illusions that he possessed that none of the members of the band would confess were rudely shattered in a few days. On his next interrogation, he found that he had Pinkhoff alone to deal with—which was very much to the liking of “Monsieur Henri.” It was quite evident that he had been extracting damaging information from the other prisoners. His first words, graced by a sarcastic smile, were :

“This time, Baucq, I know everything, and it would be to your interest to tell me all that you know. If you continue to maintain your defiant attitude you will condemn yourself and compromise the innocent. Don’t forget,” he added, trying to speak sympathetically, “that you are the father of a family.”

There were no depths of baseness to which Pinkhoff would not descend !

“I have been reprimanded by my superiors,” he remarked, assuming a very grave air, “for not having arrested your wife. In view of your obstinate silence

I see myself forced to follow their advice. Moreover, I know that your wife is fully aware of many crimes in which you have been concerned."

Poor Baucq ! The hardened scoundrel facing him had touched his tender spot.

"No, no," he protested despairingly, "my wife knows nothing at all. I refuse to believe that there is any man capable of committing such a monstrous crime, of arresting her and tearing her away from her children."

Pinkhoff seemed seriously perturbed. Assuming that sorrowful air which he loved to display on such occasions, he replied : "Then tell me what you have done. Who were your accomplices ? I insist on knowing."

Baucq would not give way. "Never !" he flashed back with defiant eyes.

The cunning policeman pretended to be filled with admiration. "Monsieur Baucq, you are a very deep man. I must admit that you have been cleverer than we. I wish that all Belgians would bear themselves as you do."

Pinkhoff refused to abandon hope of inducing Baucq to confess. That same night he went to the architect's cell—No. 72—still in the rôle of the well-meaning friend.

"Now," he said, "for the last time, are you going to tell me the truth ?" He sat down on the bed, and one would have thought from his demeanour that he was a legal adviser—not a police agent asking a man to sign his own death-warrant.

"I will denounce no one," replied Baucq. "If it

pleases you to saddle me with deeds which I have not committed because I refuse to betray my comrades, then I will bear the consequences."

Pinkhoff wasted no further words on him. In a voice suddenly become brutal he growled out: "Very well, then; when the time comes for your court-martial there will be unpleasant surprises for you."

He spoke no more than the truth; from that moment Baucq was doomed to die.

## CHAPTER X

I MUST NOW GO BACK TO THE DOSSIER ITSELF, and the confession which Nurse Cavell made. She died a martyr's death, partly through the fatal admissions that she made to Bergan and Pinkhoff, but even more through the confessions which were extorted from her fellow-prisoners.

Quixotically foolish she was, one must admit, in her sublime regard for the truth. It was no part of her creed to tell a lie, and I am quite certain that, had she done so, it would not have saved her. The mass of evidence that had been accumulated by the secret police for three or four months before the court-martial, the damning revelations about her work at the Home that had been divulged by a spy, had made her guilt undeniable. Maître Sadi Kirschen, who defended her, said that the Germans intended to have an English victim—and she was the only one possible.

Even so, however, she might have escaped with nothing more than a term of imprisonment, had she not bravely admitted at the court-martial that she had assisted not only English, but also French and Belgian soldiers, to rejoin the Allied armies. There was no mistaking the stir that rustled through the court as she said this.

Bergan and Pinkhoff had taken upon themselves the responsibility of forming a Court of Instruction,

with Pinkhoff in the rôle of examining magistrate. Such functionaries are not known in England. But in France, especially, they have the authority to examine prisoners and extract evidence that will be used for a prosecution.

Pinkhoff, indeed, liked all his satellites to describe him as *Monsieur le Juge*—which he certainly was not. A man of common birth, but unscrupulous and persuasively cunning to a degree, he had seized the power that came to him by his knowledge of French to usurp the functions of a *juge*.

The dossier sets out that on the morning of August 8, 1915, in the military prison of St. Gilles, Edith Cavell was brought out from her cell to undergo her first formal interrogation. Four other persons were present, Lieutenant Bergan, Henri Pinkhoff, Otto Mayer, and the recording clerk Neuhaus. A soldier brought her into the room.

She was still in her matron's uniform, and if it had not been for the drawn look about her eyes one might not have suspected that she knew herself to be on the threshold of death.

Mayer, always ready with the courtesies, offered her a chair, while Pinkhoff, whose long suit was sympathy, bade her a polite good morning.

"I hope you have been treated well since you have been here," he remarked. "You know, of course, that anything you want in the way of food can be procured from the canteen?"

Nurse Cavell smiled faintly.

"Now," said Pinkhoff briskly, "we will proceed with your examination. I take it that the particulars

you gave us on the day of your arrest are correct?" He read over some items written on a printed form; Edith Cavell, a directress of the Berkendael Medical Institute, born on December 4, 1866, at Swardeston, in Norfolk, the daughter of Frederick Cavell, deceased.

Nurse Cavell said nothing; it was a beautiful mid-summer day and she may have been thinking, who knows, of those far-off days when she was a little girl in Norfolk. The ugly reality of the present, the prison atmosphere, the pertinacious inquisitor who sat facing her, can have been nothing more than an unpleasant fantasy to the ascetic little woman who sat in her garb of mercy—helpless.

"I know you are a patriotic woman," Pinkhoff went on, in that suave manner which he knew so well how to assume. "Your actions prove that. All you have to do to-day is to tell us the truth. We shall not be severe upon you. I think you told us the other night that you had been taking men into your Home since the beginning of November. Is that correct?"

"Yes," said Nurse Cavell. "You know that already."

"We should be correct in saying, then, that you took these men in, fed them, and provided them with money?"

Miss Cavell agreed and Pinkhoff nodded to the recording clerk, saying: "Just take that down."

"They were mostly English and French soldiers, men who had been cut off from their regiments?"

"Yes, to the best of my knowledge."

"Now, I want to ask you a very important question," Pinkhoff said leaning back in his chair. "In addition

to these soldiers, did you also give refuge to able-bodied Belgians and Frenchmen who wanted to get to the Front ? ”

If Nurse Cavell had sensed the significance of this query, she might have thought twice before she answered it. But how could she know that it would play such a vital part in her trial two months hence ?

“ Yes,” she said slowly, “ there were a number of such men.”

Pinkhoff, with an air of great satisfaction, ejaculated :  
“ Ah, men who wanted to join the Allied armies ! ”

“ Put that down carefully,” he ordered the clerk, and then said something in German to Bergan which caused the latter individual much pleasure.

A very persuasive man was Pinkhoff—as well as very untruthful.

“ And now, Miss Cavell,” he continued, “ I suppose you know that we have already made a good many arrests in this affair, and you are probably aware that we are in possession of facts which are very damaging to you. Would you care to tell us the names of the people who brought these men to you ? ”

Nurse Cavell thought for some time. “ I don’t think so,” she said at last candidly. “ After all, surely that is your business ? ”

A dangerous gleam came into Pinkhoff’s eyes ; he leaned over to Bergan and whispered something.

“ I think I told you in the beginning, Miss Cavell, that it would be just as well for you to be truthful. I can be a good friend to anyone who plays fair with me, but you will find there is nothing to be gained by lying. Shall I suggest a few names to you ? ”

He was growing decidedly menacing when Nurse Cavell said nothing.

"Have you heard of a man named Capiau, or a Mons lawyer called Albert Libiez?"

Nurse Cavell nodded her head in assent, whereupon Pinkhoff went on to say: "And shall I be far wrong if I suggest that the head of your organisation is Prince Reginald de Croÿ?"

"That is untrue," retorted Nurse Cavell.

"Do you know a Mlle. Martin?" her interrogator went on, beginning now to warm up to his work.

"No, I do not," was the reply, which made Pinkhoff lean over again to Bergan. The latter gave an order to one of the soldiers standing by the door, and there was silence for two or three minutes. Another woman was brought into the room, rather an intellectual-looking lady, who wore glasses. Pinkhoff, who appeared highly amused, asked Miss Cavell if she knew her.

What could poor Nurse Cavell do? Mlle. Martin was Mlle. Thuliez. If they had been a couple of hardened criminals it might have been different. The poor little artifices of these patriotic women were no match for two accomplished rascals like Bergan and Pinkhoff.

"Ah!" said Pinkhoff maliciously, "I thought you would recognise each other. You see, we know much more about this matter than you think. Perhaps you would now like to tell us how many men you have received from these different people. Don't be worried by the thought that you are giving anybody away; Capiau is already in custody and the Prince de

Croÿ will be arrested shortly. As for Libiez, we can lay hands on him at any moment."

It was the old, old trick, the commonest subterfuge of the policeman. Poor Nurse Cavell, unused to such barefaced lying, fell into the trap like a child. Quietly she related that she had received from Capiiau about forty English soldiers in civilian clothes, from Libiez six, from Prince de Croÿ about fifteen stragglers, English and French, and the same number from Mlle. Thuliez.

"Of course," interjected Pinkhoff softly, "that is not all, Miss Cavell. You have also had a great many able-bodied men recruited by Prince de Croÿ and Mlle. Thuliez. Shall we say at least a hundred?"

What could one do in the face of such persistent and accurate questions? Poor Nurse Cavell must have thought of the vow that had been sworn by all the members of the band never to divulge names, and she may have wondered who had started this vicious circle of confession. She remembered Quien, that ugly duckling of a man whose behaviour had been so suspicious during the fortnight he had been kept at her Home. She knew that Philippe Baucq was in custody, as well as several others who had been in a position to know all the secrets of the organisation. And, facing her with quizzical satisfaction, was this cunning agent of the secret police with everything at his finger-tips.

Pinkhoff played with her like a cat with a mouse. Not for nothing had his spies been nosing round the *clinique* in the rue de la Culture for two months! Well spent was the money that they had been given to pump the little nurses who found Brussels such

a dull place in time of war ; equally well spent was the time that had been devoted to tapping Nurse Cavell's correspondence, as well as her telephone calls.

" Perhaps, Miss Cavell," he said in that sympathetic way of his, " you would give us a few more particulars of your patriotic work. I want you to remember that we Germans are not unkindly disposed towards you. You have been very foolish, and the best thing you can do now is to make a full confession." The double-dealing, hypocritical scoundrel said it without a blush. Occasionally he would abandon his interrogation and hold a whispered colloquy with Bergan in a corner of the room, coming back to fire a few more shots at his victim.

Nurse Cavell told him that the first soldier she had taken in was an English officer named Bodgers, who had been accompanied by a sergeant. The latter had succeeded in getting across the Dutch frontier, as far as she knew.

" In the beginning," she explained, with an artlessness which was pathetic, " I confined myself mostly to Englishmen. Sometimes it was necessary to keep them for a fortnight or three weeks. I was not sufficiently acquainted with the ways and means of getting them over the frontier."

Pinkhoff interrupted her to say : " No doubt it was later that you were brought into touch with the professional guides ? "

Another trap was about to be sprung ; the inexperienced Edith Cavell could not sense it.

" I suppose," Pinkhoff said suavely, " if I were to

suggest that these guides were made known to you by Capiau, and by a certain gentleman who is known as 'Fromage,' I should not be far wrong? Would you know this 'Fromage' if you saw him again?"

Pinkhoff must have been sniggering to himself at the ease with which he was building up his case. He pressed a bell on his desk: a minute or two afterwards Philippe Baucq was escorted into the room.

"Is this the 'Fromage' you know?" asked Pinkhoff. Nurse Cavell did not reply—neither did Baucq. The week he had been in a prison cell had not quenched his appetite for defiance; when Pinkhoff asked him if *he* knew Nurse Cavell, he gave an uncompromising "No."

"Now then, Miss Cavell," Pinkhoff said sharply, "is this the gentleman who was called 'Fromage'?"

"I cannot say."

"All right," Pinkhoff remarked to the guard, "take this man away." He also said something to the recording clerk; the effect of it is to be seen in the dossier. Monsieur Henri was never very particular about a yes or no; it was sufficient for his purpose to get the signature at the bottom of the statement. What was easier afterwards than to deny any crooked work, especially with a woman?

And so it went on; they dragged out of her the names of the places where the guides had been in the habit of picking up the men; how, between five and seven o'clock in the morning these guides, sent there by Capiau, Baucq, and Sévérin, awaited the men, who were usually escorted by her. On the eve of every journey it was usual, she explained, for either the guide

or his messenger to call at the *clinique* and inform her of the rendezvous.

"That we already know," bluffed Pinkhoff once more. "What we are anxious to ascertain is where the money came from. Would I be right in saying that Prince de Croÿ furnished most of the funds?"

More incriminating questions! No harm had been done in admitting most of the things that had taken place; it was when Pinkhoff revealed anxiety to inculcate other people that poor Nurse Cavell was on dangerous ground.

"Only partly," she replied with disarming truthfulness. "I have used a good deal of money belonging to the Home, and I have also had several sums from M. Capiau, Mlle. Thuliez, and M. Sévérin."

The information appeared to give Pinkhoff much pleasure; he bent over once more to Bergan, who could understand only a word or two of what was going on, and imparted the news with every semblance of satisfaction.

Two months afterwards, during the court-martial, when her confession was being read, she denied having received any money from M. Capiau. She said her memory had played her false. There was a touching little incident when she sat down; the Princess de Croÿ leaned over and shook her long and warmly by the hand for the unselfish manner in which she had attempted to save Capiau. A soldier sitting between them roughly smashed their hands apart.

\* \* \* \* \*

Before I deal any further with the admissions that

were forced out of Nurse Cavell, there is one extremely important matter that requires to be made plain.

In 1921 the Germans, probably in response to international opinion, allowed some of the evidence in *l'affaire Cavell* to be made known. I use the word "some" advisedly, for it was obviously in deference to the universal opprobrium which still clung to the German name over the execution of Nurse Cavell that there appeared on the Continent an officially inspired version of her statements made to the secret police in Brussels in 1915.

It is an astonishing fact that in *all* the literature which has since been written round *l'affaire Cavell*, the only confession made public was that of the woman whose death aroused such world-wide condemnation. Why?

*All* the prisoners who were tried at the Senate House in Brussels on October 7-8, 1915, made statements, or confessions—whichever way one likes to regard them—and signed them. *These were the only evidence of guilt brought forward.* True, Bergan and Pinkhoff went into the improvised witness-box, but only for the purpose of denying an innuendo by the War Court Counsellor, Dr. Stöber, that the organisation was also concerned with espionage. All the people found guilty were hopelessly involved by their own confessions.

Defending counsel were not permitted to cross-examine the "Black Devil" and his principal assistant, nor were they allowed to query any statement, however damaging, that was read out from the confessions. The prisoners themselves could, and did, expostulate

now and again ; but to all intents and purposes they were wasting their breath.

It is a disgraceful libel on the memory of Nurse Cavell to make the world believe that she was the only person who made a confession. The dossier of the secret police tells an entirely different story.

I will go even further, and say that the unfortunate woman was irreparably incriminated by two of her fellow-prisoners who had been interrogated by Bergan and Pinkhoff a few days before, as well as by a vain, talkative woman who had unwisely been permitted to know all about the work that was going on.

One can understand the German motive in casting this slur on the martyred woman ; they were anxious to rid themselves of any suggestion that they had unjustly condemned her. It is highly significant that, as far back as 1920, the Soldiers' Council in Berlin should have urged upon the Government the formation of a High Court to ascertain, among other problems of the war, why Nurse Cavell had been executed, and also demanded the production of the documents in the case.

So, in 1921, strangely enough, there appeared in various European countries a few meagre particulars of *l'affaire Cavell*, which included the confession and a few other items which are to be found in the beginning of the dossier. Nothing else of any importance ; if one could believe the evidence that the Germans put out, Nurse Cavell was the only person who had made a full admission of her guilt. Still, such tactics were only in keeping with the whole unsavoury business. Bergan himself, apparently having been ordered to

give some explanation of the manner in which Nurse Cavell had been tricked into making confession, supplies this illuminating statement :

All our suppositions, based on the results of the researches in the papers found at the houses of the arrested persons, were confirmed by the depositions of the Cavell woman. . . . To this end we resorted to the trick of making believe that the required indications were already known to the police.

He was telling the truth for once in his life ; all through the dossier there is ample and pathetic evidence of the sinister cleverness displayed in "double-crossing" the suspects. Not so much by Bergan, perhaps, as by Monsieur Henri. Still, as I say, it is the oldest police ruse in the world. As you run through the dossier you can almost hear Pinkhoff saying: "Confide in me and all will be well. Remember that I am always your friend."

## CHAPTER XI

PINKHOFF HAD ALREADY TOLD the Princess de Croÿ, calmly disregarding the solemn pledge that he had given in the presence of her grandmother at Bellignies, that she was involved in far too serious a matter to be allowed to return. For reasons best known to the higher authorities, the Princess had been taken to the *Kommandantur*, presumably because of her exalted rank.

She found herself locked up in a room on the first floor which was directly above one used by the officers of the *Kommandantur* as a mess-room. That same evening, miserably ruminating on the catastrophe that had overtaken her, she could hear the officers holding high revel and a gramophone blaring out a tune from Gilbert and Sullivan's *Iolanthe*. Food was brought to her by a mess-man in uniform—quite a sympathetic sort of individual, unduly inquisitive as to why she was a prisoner.

Torn with anxiety, and fretting over her aged relative, the Princess spent an uncomfortable night. A sentry paced up and down all through the long hours; motor-cars arrived in the courtyard below, bearing unfortunate creatures who had fallen into the hands of the *Polizei*. Morning came, and any hopes of immediate release that the Princess entertained were rudely shattered by a knock at her door which heralded the unwelcome appearance of Lieutenant Bergan.

"When am I to be allowed to go back to Bellignies?" demanded the Princess at once.

"I am afraid it will not be possible," was the reply. "I have received instructions that you are to be kept here."

"Then your promise was worthless?" asked the Princess.

Bergan shrugged his shoulders. "I must break my promise," he said cynically. "I am already in trouble for allowing your brother to escape."

The Princess's heart leapt with joy; it was on the tip of her tongue to ask for more information. But Bergan himself went on to tell her that they had received news that the Prince had reached Holland.

"I am going to make you an offer," he went on. "Tell us where he is, and you shall be released."

He was probably bluffing, but he was not wily enough. All that the Princess would say was: "If my brother is in Holland, he is safe."

Courageously ignoring all her own worries, she wrote to Bergan the following day asking him if he would give her permission to return to Bellignies to see her grandmother. The letter was unanswered, and she wrote again, to this effect:

Dear Sir,

As the time is drawing near without my having received any decision, I beg to repeat my request to be able to go immediately to the Château de Bellignies.

I have been trusting in the word of honour, given to me *unreservedly* by two German officers, that I should be able, at the end of my cross-examination, to pay a visit to an aged and sick relative. I fear disastrous consequences for her if I do not see her without delay. To send a

strange face in my place would only add to the cruelty, for she cannot endure strangers and I left her with the definite promise to go back on the same day, or at the very latest to-day. In any other circumstances, I should have insisted on keeping her with me, for the journey would have been less harmful for her than the mere waiting, especially as this day is the anniversary of the death of her youngest child.

May I therefore request you to do all that lies in your power in order to keep your word that has been given. I will give mine not to leave my castle without permission.

Yours faithfully,

(signed) MARIE, PRINCESS DE CROY.

More than a fortnight passed : the only consolation that was afforded the grief-stricken Princess came in the form of a visit from her friend Countess Marie de Lichtervelde. But the two ladies had little opportunity of exchanging news ; Bergan remained in the room all the time after warning them that they must speak of nothing but personal affairs. The Countess did, however, say something that Bergan never heard, just one word that told the Princess her brother had indeed got across the frontier.

The *curé* from Bellignies arrived at the *Kommandantur* with the dire intelligence that the Princess's grandmother was on the verge of death. That, at last, seems to have moved the Germans to some show of compassion, for a few days afterwards they, having, no doubt, confirmed the tidings, the Princess received a visit from an official who informed her that she would be permitted to go to Bellignies for a few hours on condition that she gave her word of honour.

It was to the Princess's credit that she did not make the obvious retort ; instead, being only too grateful

for the slightest mercy, she readily gave her promise that she would return to the *Kommandantur* when required.

"You see, Madame," explained her caller, an overbearing sort of person entirely devoid of manners, "it would be awkward if we had to use force to bring you back. You will be accompanied by two officers who have orders that you are not to be allowed out of their sight, even in your grandmother's room."

With these gentlemanly observations he went out. Apparently, however, the high powers were of divided minds about affording even an aged and dying woman a single act of mercy. Later in the day, while the Princess was wearily waiting for the time to go to Bellignies, her distracted thoughts were broken by another visit from the same official. In an angry voice, without even the slightest apology, he informed her that by order of the Governor-General, Baron von Bissing, the permission had been cancelled.

Three days afterwards, Bergan came into the Princess's room accompanied by Maître Alexander Braun, the famous Brussels lawyer who had been engaged to defend her. He brought the distressing news that the courageous old lady who had borne all the privations of the war with such fortitude had died on the preceding Sunday. Badly frightened by some soldiers who had raided the château in the Princess's absence, she had fallen down senseless and never properly recovered consciousness.

Nothing remained now but to await the forthcoming trial. She was not ill-treated; food was brought to her from the officers' mess below—a mockery of

kindness when she thought of the tragic events that had happened at Bellignies in her absence. Her strength, never great at any time, failed her. One evening, shortly before the court-martial, she fainted.

\* \* \* \* \*

With a heavy price on his head and the definite knowledge that a firing-party awaited him if he fell into enemy hands, Prince Reginald de Croÿ literally swam through the net that had been cast for him all over Belgium.

The Château de Bellignies had been raided in vain ; the loyal servants would say nothing.

"Where is your master ?" shouted the irascible Captain von Kirchenheim, who, on peremptory instructions from Brussels, had driven over to the château from Maubeuge with orders to capture the Prince by hook or by crook.

"That I cannot say," retorted the old manservant who was being interrogated.

"When did you see him last ?"

"Only a few days ago."

"And you do not know where he is now ?"

"No, monsieur," said the old man with sarcastic reproof in his voice, "it is not necessary for the Prince to inform his servants where he is going."

This did not please von Kirchenheim in the least. He swore, he stamped, and he raved, threatening all the staff with unheard-of pains if they did not divulge the whereabouts of the missing Prince. Actually speaking, they did not know, and when the policeman finally went away, after turning everything inside out,

they could congratulate themselves that their master was still at liberty.

But it was now distressingly obvious that the Prince could continue his patriotic work no longer. The damaging admissions that Bergan and Pinkhoff had extracted from their captives in the St. Gilles prison—rumours of which were all too prevalent in Brussels—made it only too plain that he would be wise to flee before it was too late.

With a battalion of spies searching for him, the Prince remained in Brussels for some days. His friend Countess Marie de Lichtervelde repeatedly urged upon him the duty he owed to his country to get across the frontier, and at last, with a heavy heart, the Prince consented. Among the many courageous Belgian people silently fighting the Germans just then was a nun named Sister Josephine, who had already been responsible for hundreds of young men escaping from the occupied country and joining the Belgian forces.

Her principal assistant in this dangerous work was Henri Beyns, one of those obscure heroes whose exploits in the war would fill a book. When I say that Beyns crossed the heavily guarded frontier no fewer than *four hundred times*, it will give some idea of his amazing daring and resource. Yet, outside Belgium he has never been heard of. It is true that the British Government decorated him for his services ; but he was as modest as he was brave, though the deeds he accomplished would have earned him the Victoria Cross on the battlefield a hundred times over.

All the German vigilance could not outwit woman's

ingenuity. As it was out of the question to think of the Prince travelling through Belgium with his own identity papers, the women held a council of war, and decided there was but one way out of the difficulty—they must find someone whom he could impersonate. They thought of a man they knew who had died not long before. It was just a matter of luck whether the German officials at the *Meldeamt* would be sufficiently curious to make searching enquiries when an identity card was applied for.

In Brussels it was already notorious that the Germans were quite gallant in their attitude toward the fair sex. Even von Bissing himself had been known to unbend under the blandishments of an attractive young lady. Hence it came about that a *very* pretty little Belgian girl presented herself at the *Meldeamt* to say that the René Desmet who wanted a *carte d'identité* was all he pretended to be.

Dangerous work ! Had she been old and ugly, she would probably have found herself in the *Kommandantur* in double-quick time. As it was, the stout Landstürmann who received her blinked his eyes with pleasurable surprise on seeing his fascinating visitor, and with no more than a few cursory questions handed over the card.

So far, so good. The Prince could now get out of Brussels ; after that he must trust to Henri Beyns. It would take a long time to recapitulate the thrilling adventures and narrow escapes they had before they reached the Dutch frontier. As I said a few paragraphs back, the Prince actually swam through the net that the secret police had thrown out.

They passed the first night after leaving Brussels in a cottage which Beyns had frequently used to hide the stragglers. Then, the following day, they were secreted in an abbey by some monks—many were the gallant actions that the Church performed in Belgium in those days—until such time as Beyns deemed it safe to proceed on their perilous way.

They had to travel, running all the time the risk of being betrayed, through a country swarming with German police. Hiding by day in the woods, sleeping as best they could in ditches and haystacks, they went on a few miles every night. Beyns would take no chances whatever.

But at last, a fortnight after they had left Brussels, they were near enough to Holland for Beyns to say that they must now attempt to cross the frontier. He was in touch with a guide who could get them across.

Lying one night in a hut a short distance from the canal they had to cross, they were dumbfounded when a party of men burst into the place with pistols in their hands, demanding to know who they were.

"Quiet!" exclaimed Beyns in an angry whisper. "We are Belgians."

But it was just touch-and-go with them. The intruders were men who were also trying to reach Holland. The same guide who had promised to get the Prince over had given them the hut as the meeting-place.

Tingling with excitement, they lay in the hut awaiting the coming of the guide. It was nearly midnight before he arrived. Without any waste of time he told the Prince and Beyns to follow him.

Tiptoeing their way through the brushwood, they reached the spot on the canal that had to be crossed before they could get into Holland.

Then another difficulty arose. The guide could not swim ! He was a plucky fellow, and quite willing to risk his life, but someone had to get him over the canal. Fortunate indeed that the Prince was an expert swimmer. Silently letting himself down into the water, and holding the guide with one hand, he negotiated the canal in safety, while Beyns followed.

Just as they had reached the other side they heard a loud splash in the water. One of their fellow-refugees from the hut had fallen in. Instantaneously there leapt out of the night the blinding flash of a searchlight.

Even war is not without its humours. Beyns had gone back to the Belgian side and brought over the clothes of his comrades in distress, so there they were, absolutely naked, still in Belgium, anxiously asking themselves what would happen now.

Up and down the canal the searchlight zig-zagged. Everything had suddenly gone ominously quiet. The light was no more than a few hundred yards away ; if the guard had done its duty and beaten along the canal banks the clothes must have been discovered. Beyns pluckily volunteered to crawl down and see what had happened to them. He could see no signs of them, however, and after holding counsel with the Prince it was decided that the poor fellows must take their chance.

They still had some distance to go before they were actually in Holland. Beyns said he would leave the

clothes in a hut, where they would probably be found ; and with the guide leading the way they continued their journey.

It was pitch dark. Stumbling through the undergrowth, fearful that even now they might be discovered, they pushed forward with the knowledge that only a mile or two now lay between them and safety. Beyns created an interlude by falling into a dyke, which necessitated the Prince fishing him out. Wet to the skin, they pushed on through the lonely country until the dawn began to break.

The light of a fire some distance ahead caused them to pause. The guide whispered that it probably belonged to the Dutch frontier guard—and so it proved. After cautiously creeping forward and reconnoitring the position, he came back to say that they had reached Holland at last.

The soldiers gave them a cordial welcome. Coffee was speedily forthcoming, and in an hour or so the refugees were on their way to a village, where, after a much-needed rest and making themselves more like civilised human beings, they took train for The Hague. The guide had already gone back, and the Prince was free to report to the Allied Governments all the momentous events that had taken place in Belgium with the breaking-up of the great organisation.

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Annihilated it was, beyond all shadow of doubt. After rounding up all the leaders—with the exception of the Prince himself—Bergan and Pinkhoff had now concentrated their activities on the smaller fry. One

by one they were brought into St. Gilles. Maurice Crabbe, another chemist, like Derveau, was brought in from Mons. The Germans had arrested him at eleven in the morning, and then, at seven o'clock at night, called for his wife Martha. August 21 had been a field-day for the police in the Borinage. Armand Jeannes had done his nefarious spying so well that all the members of the band fell into the net.

Cavenaile, another apothecary, was taken at Wiheries, as was Julia Vandmergele, who earned her living in the Wiheries market. The Boche wanted her for concealing an English soldier for five months and then heinously conducting him to a place of safety. Simultaneously the raiding police came down on little Jeanne Dubuisson; she was only eighteen years old, but she had done her bit towards beating the invader by picking up parties of Frenchmen who wanted to fight for their country and taking them on to Brussels.

Thence on to Brussels went the police once more, this time to pick up the people who had been giving shelter to the men whilst they were awaiting guidance into Holland. It had not been difficult to drag out of the humble folk who had been thrown into St. Gilles the names of those who had provided board and lodging. With death and all its fears upon them, it was hardly to be wondered at that they should cling to any hope, however slight, of placating the remorseless enemy.

Right on through September the arrests continued, one leading to another. Paul Godefroy, a cheerful little jeweller of Parisian descent, fell victim to an injudicious female tongue, but still refused to lose

heart. Maurice Pansaers and Oscar Mathieu, who owned cafés where refugees had been harboured, were hauled off to the prison by the myrmidons of the secret police, as was good-natured Madame Sovet, who had also given shelter to a few men.

Mathieu had put up a couple of English stragglers brought to him by Madame Crabbe; he was paid three shillings a day for them until such time as they could be sent on their way to Holland.

Big, heroic François Crapez, the plucky fellow who had led 200 Allied soldiers to Dunkirk in the very early days of the war, was the next to be apprehended—another victim of a woman's tongue. When Pinkhoff got him inside St. Gilles he laughed boisterously, and made no bones about admitting having brought twenty-five able-bodied Frenchmen into Brussels.

"To fight against Germany?" asked "Monsieur Henri."

"Certainly," said François. "For what other purpose?"

"And how much were you to be paid for this no doubt pleasant work?" asked Pinkhoff.

"Not a great deal," replied François. "No more than three francs (about 2s. 3d.) apiece. And of that amount I had to give something to the women who were working with me. The men paid me the money themselves when they reached Brussels," he added with disarming candour.

Can you visualise François collecting a miserable three francs all round? Such is the romance of war.

And so it went on. There was the forty-year-old widow Marie-Claire Libiez, who had acted as carrier

between the villages in the Borinage. Pinkhoff was astounded to hear that she had been concealing and helping English soldiers since October, 1914, as he was about Étienne Lemaire the miner, who had hid two Englishmen in civilian clothes for five months in a shed behind his humble cottage in Wasmes.

The trail went on to other people in Brussels. Armand Heuze the lawyer—denounced by one of the captives—had to admit his guilt in arranging for men to be boarded until they could be handed over to the guides; he did not deny having rendered himself liable to punishment. "Monsieur Henri" always liked to obtain that admission; it would save endless trouble at the court-martial.

Demoustier, another lawyer from Mons, was caught, as was Joséphine Honorez, an intrepid little woman who for months had hidden three of the men cut off after the Battle of Mons. Nearly sixty was Joséphine; but time had not dimmed her fighting spirit. She faced Pinkhoff and Bergan with undaunted courage, and contemptuously told them that what she had done was for patriotism's sake—not for money.

There were many other people for whom the secret police were raking the country. They badly wanted the Congo missionary, Father Arthur Piersoul, as well as his friend, Father Meeus. The Abbé de Longueville, another gallant recruiter, had also aroused their curiosity—all in vain. The three priests were safely across the frontier.

On September 17, 1915, acting on the instructions of the newly arrived Military Governor, a report was specially prepared by Bergan showing the progress

## EDITH CAVELL

that had been made in the great round-up. I give a few extracts from the document as it appears in the dossier :

*Brussels,*  
*18th September 1915.*

### FINAL REPORT

The present proceedings have shown that the matter concerns a widespread, extensive organisation, consisting of all grades of society, which had as its chief aim the conducting of troops to the enemy.

From an influential prince who, through the sacrifice of large sums of money, or through personal conducting, worked against the interests of the German military authorities, to a poor miner who, through the concealing of English and French stragglers, sheltered them from being seized by the German officials, all the accused had the same goal in view, namely, wilfully to render assistance to an enemy power. . . . The district of Englefontaine, Maroilles, and Bavay in north France was chosen as the field of operation for the group led by Prince Reginald de Croÿ and the accused Louise Thuliez, while the second group, led by the lawyer Libiez, carried on its activities in the Borinage. . . .

Both groups at first worked separately, seeking out the English and French soldiers . . . conducting them sometimes themselves and sometimes through the medium of special guides to Brussels to the co-accused English-woman, Miss Cavell, who then, with her confederates, saw to the concealing of the troops in Brussels and their further transport to the frontier.

The castle of Prince Reginald de Croÿ in Bellignies served as intermediate station for the group working in the north of France. . . . The fabrication of the forged identity cards was then carried out by the engineer Capiau of Wasmès and the chemist Derveau of Paturages.

The financial support for the first group came chiefly from Prince de Croÿ and his sister Princess Marie, whilst the second group obtained the necessary money from the

lawyer Libiez, the engineer Hostelet of Brussels, and the chemist Sévénin. . . . In Brussels the troops were concealed in nine different places through the instrumentality of Miss Cavell, and then conveyed over the Dutch frontier by guides. In this way Miss Cavell was responsible for the conducting of about 250 men to the enemy army, as has been proved. . . . Several of the soldiers and able-bodied men informed the accused of their arrival, sometimes from Holland, sometimes from the enemy front.

According to the German military code, Nurse Cavell was guilty of what was described as a complete act of treason in transmitting troops to the enemy.

If one should wonder what right the invaders had to impose on an occupied country a code of laws utterly at variance with all preconceived ideas of right and wrong, I can only quote what Mr. Brand Whitlock, the American Minister in Brussels, had to say about the courts that were called upon to uphold them :

These so-called courts . . . were mere inquisitorial bodies, guided by no principle save that inherent in their own bloody nature ; they did as they pleased, and would have scorned a Jeffreys as too lenient, a Lynch as too formal, a Spanish *auto da fe* as too technical, a tribunal of the French revolution as soft and sentimental. Before them the accused had literally no rights ; he could not, even as a right, present a defence, and if he was permitted to speak on his own behalf it was only as a generous and liberal favour.

Nevertheless, it was before such a court that Nurse Cavell and her fellow-prisoners were fated to appear.

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From August 5 to October 7, 1915, poor Edith Cavell remained in No. 23 cell on the ground floor of

the St. Gilles prison. The only people she saw, apart from the German staff and the Belgian jailers, were some of the nurses from her home in the rue de la Culture. Now and again she had a word with captives in adjoining cells, but most of the time she was allowed for exercise—an hour a day—she was closely guarded.

Pinkhoff's protégé, Otto Mayer, who spoke English with little or no accent, came to her cell frequently, and, if one could judge from his conversation, he was genuinely sorry for her plight.

One day in the middle of August she asked what he thought would be her fate. Mayer shook his head gloomily.

"If I had my way," he replied, "I should do nothing more than send you back to England. You are a wonderful woman, but you have been too foolish for words. The people in Berlin are determined to stamp out all recruiting. And it was not for you," he added, just as he was taking his departure, "to have involved yourself in sending these mobilisable men to the front. Had it been nothing but wounded English soldiers it would have been different. But now"—he shut the door shaking his head sadly.

All of which was undeniable. But what excuse could be offered for the outrageous attitude adopted by the higher authorities at the time when the American Minister first approached Baron von der Lancken?

On September 10 the Minister wrote again in more peremptory terms. This time he had an answer. The dossier reveals that von der Lancken must have sent to the secret police for a report on the case, for in

EDITH CAVELL

the file there is this document, written by Bergan :

Edith Cavell was arrested on 5th August, 1915, at 4 p.m. and conducted to the military prison of S.-Gilles, as she wilfully assisted the enemy power during war which has broken out against Germany. . . . She has already admitted that since November, 1914, to the beginning of July, 1915, she has concealed, provided for, and supplied with money in her Home English and French stragglers in civilian clothes, amongst them an English colonel, as well as able-bodied Belgians and Frenchmen who wanted to reach the Front to join the Allied Army. . . . The accused Miss Cavell's defence lies in the hands of the lawyer Braun, who has already approached this office. The conclusion of the proceedings may be reached in about 14 days time. . . .

Then follows this astounding revelation :

As the government court does not on principle allow a conversation with prisoners before the final judicial trial, in the interest of the examination it is requested not to grant Maître de Leval permission to visit Miss Cavell. De Leval is the lawyer of the American Legation, and lives in Brussels, Avenue de la Toison d'Or.

(signed) BERGAN,  
*Lieutenant.*

In plain words, don't let any meddling advocates come near our victim until we have done with her. Certain it is that neither Nurse Cavell nor any of her unfortunate colleagues would have made the fatal admissions that were so cleverly extracted from them by " Monsieur Henri " if they had received the proper legal assistance to which they were undoubtedly entitled.

So Mr. Whitlock, the American Minister, was told that no lawyer could see the imprisoned English-

woman. He did the best he could for the time being. Maître de Leval was instructed to confer with his eminent fellow-jurist, Thomas Braun, thinking all the time that the case would be no more serious than others which had already taken place in Brussels.

But it soon became evident that the Germans had no intention of allowing the American Minister to interfere in the forthcoming court-martial. A few days before the proceedings he was flabbergasted to receive the notification that Maître Braun would not be allowed to appear for Miss Cavell. It was suggested, by Maître Braun, that his place should be taken by Maître Sadi Kirschen.

Now it is highly significant of the whole course of this strange sequence of events that as far back as September 7, Maître Kirschen should have been approached by someone—before von der Lancken thought fit to give Mr. Brand Whitlock an answer to his first letter—to undertake Nurse Cavell's defence. This is Maître Kirschen's own version of the mystery. The italics are mine :

On September 7, 1915, I was asked to defend Miss Cavell. I wrote to her to that effect, asking her if she accepted me as her defender. *Never having had an answer to this, I gathered that the police had intercepted my letter.*

It seems more than probable, in the light of this amazing revelation, that the German authorities in Brussels intended to give Nurse Cavell as few privileges as possible—not that the poor woman had already received any. Here she was, literally on trial for her life, forbidden to communicate to her lawyer a single

fact that might be pleaded in extenuation of her so-called crime.

The manner in which the confessions had been dragged out of her, as well as out of her fellow-captives, would have been sufficient to have damned the evidence for the prosecution in any properly constituted court of law. And if that were not enough, *her advocate was forbidden to speak to her during the trial, and even afterwards.* All that Maître Kirschen could do was to "pick up" the case as it went along, without even the opportunities given to an Old Bailey barrister picking up a 23s. 6d. "dock brief."

Before I pass on to the court-martial itself there is a little incident which is worth recapitulating in some detail, bearing as it does on the composition of the court that tried the thirty-five prisoners.

One night in September, when the Princess de Croÿ was still imprisoned in the *Kommandantur*, her supper did not arrive at its usual time. Down below her room, in the dining-hall of the *Kommandant's* staff, there seemed to be great rejoicing, to judge by the banging of glasses, loud laughter, and frequent cheering that broke out every few minutes.

At last, when the mess waiter arrived with the Princess's meal, an explanation was forthcoming.

"A thousand pardons, Highness. Our new Military Governor has been dining with the *Kommandant*. Such a fine man! He got up to make a speech and he said to the gentlemen: 'Who is it that won the war in Roumania? Not I, gentlemen. It is the *Landstürmann*.' And then he took me by the arm, Highness and said: 'You are a *Landstürmann*, yes?'

“ ‘*Ja wohl!* [of course] *Excellenz,*’ I answered proudly.

“ ‘This is the man who won the war, gentlemen,’ said the General. And then, Highness, they all cheered me like mad.”

Interesting, then, to record that von Sauberzweig’s admiration for the Landstürm went to the length of appointing all five officers who constituted the court-martial from the ranks of that august body of men ! Their names are as follows :

LIEUTENANT COLONEL WERTHMANN, *President.*

CAPTAIN BARON VON CORNBERG.

CAPTAIN ECK.

FIRST LIEUTENANT STENGER.

LIEUTENANT PAUL.

Heaven forbid, however, that one should throw any doubt on their probity. After all, it may have been nothing more than coincidence ; as Maître Kirschen remarked, the judges themselves seemed to have little liking for the squalid story of trickery and intimidation that was unfolded to them in the course of the proceedings.

## CHAPTER XII

IN THE PRISON OF ST. GILLES there was intense activity on the fateful morning that the great court-martial was to open. The jailers had issued instructions to the captives to be ready at 7 a.m. The trial was to take place in the Senate Chamber, and there was no doubt that the Germans intended it to be an impressive spectacle.

Nurse Cavell, discarding her matron's uniform for a plain coat and skirt, came out into the circular hall of the prison, and there, for the first time, saw the many humble folk who had assisted her in her noble work of saving wounded soldiers. Sévérin, Libiez, Hostelet, Mlle. Thuliez, Mme. Bodart and one or two others were well known to her. She looked with curious eyes at the rough little people who had fallen into the German net, while they, for their part, gazed avidly at the pale-faced, grey-haired woman who had previously been to them nothing more than a magnetic name.

However, there was no time for confidences. A party of soldiers with slung rifles shepherded them to the front door of the prison, where a couple of motor-buses were waiting to take them to the Senate. One by one their names were called; when a 'bus was filled, a guard got in behind.

Nurse Cavell was in no mood for conversation;

her thoughts were preoccupied as the 'bus rumbled over the cobble-stones. She could see the citizens of Brussels hurrying to their work, but her thoughts seemed to be far away.

They arrived at the Parliament buildings. Two by two, for all the world like the animals in the Ark, they were escorted to the Senate Chamber, to find a group of German officials already in attendance. Obviously, also, this court-martial was the subject of tremendous interest to the "occupant." The great public gallery of the chamber was filled with German officers, who gazed with curious eyes upon the thirty-five harassed-looking prisoners as they filed in and sat down where they were ordered.

There was a rustle of interest as a frail, delicate-looking woman dressed in black was escorted in and respectfully shown to a seat. It was the Princess de Croÿ, brought from the *Kommandantur*. Then another stir took place as a smart, dandyish man came bustling in and laid down on a table a thick dossier which was obviously the papers of the case for the prosecution.

This was the formidable Dr. Stöber, who had been brought to Brussels only eight days before, specially to conduct this case. Maître Kirschen describes him as handsome and slender ; to judge by the spruceness of his appearance, it seemed that he had just come from a Munich hairdresser's shop.

In actual fact he had but recently arrived from the occupied areas of Northern France, where he had been engaged almost continuously since the beginning of the war in conducting courts-martial.

Maître Kirschen makes no bones about saying what he thought about Dr. Stöber :

Who was this man that sent Miss Cavell to her death ? *he asks in his Memoirs.* By profession, military auditor (which would correspond in England to a judge-advocate), he came from the North of France, his ears still buzzing with the din of war, haunted by the idea of danger . . . he treated the case as one concerned with spying. Miss Cavell did no spying, but he would not hear her defenders. All through the case he was hard, brittle, passionate, imperious. Devoured with ambition, having to his credit a great knowledge of martial law and the penal code.

And no doubt Maître Kirschen summed up this bloodthirsty prosecutor quite accurately when he concluded by saying that Stöber's manner was that of the *nouveau riche* ; he was hard with the poor and the officials, gross with old men and old women, but ready to lick the feet of the aristocrats.

There could be no question that Stöber was in his element in the impressive surroundings of this historic chamber, where in 1914 King Albert of the Belgians had uncompromisingly spurned the German request to allow their armies to pass through his country. The vast semicircular hall, the scattered crowd of prisoners separated by helmeted soldiers, the long table in front at which the officers of the court-martial sat, and the swarm of officers in the back, constituted exactly the audience that Stöber wanted.

Like an actor taking the limelight, he looked round as though expecting applause. It was in a manner happy and confident, and fully assured of success, that he opened the proceedings.

One by one the prisoners' names were called. The

lawyers behind them rose from their seats and announced for whom they were appearing : they were not permitted to see anything more of their clients than could be obtained from a back view. Can one imagine a greater travesty of justice ?

After all the names had been answered to, thirty-four of the prisoners were ordered to leave the Chamber. Nurse Cavell was the one to be left !

If any doubt could exist about the fact that she had been chosen as the victim-in-chief of this great trial, it was effectually dissipated when Stöber opened the case by describing her as the head of a formidable organisation brought into existence for the purpose of sending men to the Allied armies.

She looked anything but dangerous as she sat before her judges, with drawn face and tired eyes, her mind obviously wearily asking itself why they should take all this trouble about her. The officers composing the court-martial repeatedly glanced at her, plainly finding it difficult to believe that this pathetic little creature with the grey hair could be a serious enemy of Germany. It would have been better, perhaps, had she worn her matron's uniform. But with characteristic modesty she had left it behind in her cell at St. Gilles, scorning to utilise anything that could be interpreted as a plea for mercy.

Stöber, as a man thoroughly enjoying himself, read out the statements that she had made in prison. There was no cross-examination ; all that Maître Kirschen could do, when the time came, was to make a plea for mercy.

The court interpreter asked Nurse Cavell to stand

up to answer some questions confirming the admissions that Bergan and Pinkhoff had extracted from her to prove, possibly, that the work of these gentlemen had been perfectly fair and above-board. Speaking in French, with a strong English accent, she made her replies without hesitation.

"From November, 1914, to July, 1915," began the interpreter in a tense silence, "you have sheltered English and French soldiers?"

"Yes, that is so," said the Englishwoman.

"You have helped Englishmen, Belgians and Frenchmen capable of military service, giving them information how to reach the front?"

"Yes."

"With whom were you working?"

Nurse Cavell remained silent for a few moments; probably she was thinking how many people might be involved.

"With M. Capiiau, Mlle. Thuliez, M. Derveau, and M. Libiez."

"Now, will you tell the court who was at the head of your organisation?"

"There was no head," said Nurse Cavell decidedly.

At this there was a whispered colloquy between Dr. Stöber and the interpreter. In a ringing voice the latter asked: "Was it not the Prince de Croÿ?"

"No, the Prince did nothing more than send a few men to whom he had given some money."

Then came a pause while Stöber indulged in further whispering.

"Why did you commit the deeds of which you are accused?"

Nurse Cavell's eyes lighted up ; for the first time during the proceedings she began to show something of her old animation.

"Because," she said slowly and impressively, "at the beginning of the war two English soldiers were sent to me. They were in danger of death ; one was wounded as well. I thought it no more than my duty to save them from being shot."

Stöber jumped to his feet like a flash. Addressing the officers of the court-martial in their own tongue, which Nurse Cavell did not understand in the least, he violently argued that these stragglers were *never* in danger of death. Perhaps his memory was at fault !

After he had finished, the interpreter turned once more to Nurse Cavell, demanding to know if she really believed that these men would be shot.

"I had to believe it," she said with pathetic insistence.

"And did you realise that in helping these able-bodied men over the frontier you were working against Germany as well as for the enemy ?"

Could one imagine any such question being permitted in any reputable court of law ? It was nothing less than asking Nurse Cavell to sign her own death-warrant.

She would not say yes or no ; all the interpreter could get out of her was that her only thought had been to get these men safely to Holland, after which their actions were no further business of hers.

Then came an even more damning question.

"In addition to the wounded men you have told

us about, you were also engaged in helping able-bodied Belgians and Frenchmen ? ”

“ Yes,” replied Nurse Cavell, hesitating slightly ; she could see what was coming.

“ They were not disabled men ? ”

“ No.” The Senate Chamber, packed as it was then, stirred uneasily. The lawyers sitting behind looked at each other with dismayed faces. The President of the court-martial rapidly wrote something in the book in front of him. As for poor Nurse Cavell, she remained entirely unperturbed.

“ And how many men did you help in this way ? ” the interpreter went on at a further prompting from Stöber.

“ About two hundred.”

There was nothing further that her prosecutor wanted from her. After speaking a few words to the President—with Nurse Cavell still standing on her feet—he nodded his head. Nurse Cavell sat down. For the time being the ordeal was over. Another prisoner was brought in and the court-martial continued its work.

\* \* \* \* \*

The studious, bespectacled Mlle. Louise Thuliez took her place. Dr. Stöber wasted no time in getting to work.

“ You have pleaded guilty,” he began loudly, “ to passing one hundred and twenty-six mobilisable men into Holland ? ”

“ Yes.” There was nothing else to say.

“ Have you heard from these men ? ”

“ No, none of them has written to me.”

"But," exclaimed the interpreter, after Stöber had whispered something in his ear, "you told Madame Bodart that you had heard from an English soldier who had been lodged in her house?"

"I may have done so," was Mlle. Thuliez's reply.

Then came the question which had already been addressed to Nurse Cavell, the one that had intrigued the Germans above all others: "Who was the head of your organisation?"

"There was no head," retorted Mlle. Thuliez spiritedly, "and there was no organisation. We agreed to do all we could for success."

She went on to add that of all the people they had helped, she did not know how many had actually crossed the frontier.

"Who were the guides who conducted these men?" the interpreter went on. Even at this late hour, apparently, the Germans had not given up hope of laying hands on a few more victims. But they got no satisfaction from Mlle. Thuliez.

"I did not know the guides," she replied. "The young men who passed through my hands were sent to Miss Cavell and Baucq. A few I sent to Capiau, as well as to the Countess de Belleville."

"Perhaps you will tell the court who provided the money for this work of yours?"

"As to that," said Mlle. Thuliez, "there was very little money available. It is true that Prince de Croÿ gave me five hundred francs, but for the most part the work was voluntary, carried out by patriotic people."

"Now then," the interpreter continued, "did the

Princess de Croÿ take the photos which were used on the identity papers carried by these men ? ”

That, also, was no secret. Mlle. Thuliez had to admit that the Princess had indeed played her part in enabling the men to get out of the country.

At the conclusion of her interrogation she was asked why she had elected to involve herself in a conspiracy against the German army. Her answer was noteworthy in its simplicity : “ Because I am a Frenchwoman.”

In the passages outside the hall the captives were anxiously awaiting their turn. With a strong body of police guarding them they had no opportunity of speaking to one another, but as the morning wore on the vigilance slackened.

The sentries, tired of watching their prisoners, began talking to each other. It seemed difficult to believe that only a few yards away dramas of life and death were being played out.

One of Stöber's subordinates came outside for a breath of fresh air and began chatting with Georges Hostelet, an employee of the millionaire manufacturer Solvay, whom the Germans fondly believed to be financing all the recruiting in Belgium.

“ I suppose,” said the German, nodding towards the Senate Chamber, “ that you haven't often had cause to come here ? ”

“ No,” replied Hostelet.

“ What are you going to do with the place when we leave Belgium ? ”—seemingly a gentleman with no delusions about the permanency of the German occupation.

Hostelet, somewhat taken aback, could only reply that he supposed the buildings would then revert to their original use, to which his candid questioner made retort that it would be necessary to disinfect the place first !

Baucq's name was called. Throughout the morning he had been in a state of tense agitation. Obsessed with thoughts of his wife and family, he had remained standing moodily against the wall, speaking to no one, turning over and over in his mind what he would say when his time came to face the court-martial.

He was brisk enough, however, squaring his shoulders proudly, when he strode in and stood up to face the damning questions that were fired at him.

He told the interpreter that he was a good patriot, which caused Stöber to wax sarcastic at his expense at every possible opportunity. Every now and again the prosecutor stopped the interrogation to harangue the officers of the court-martial, telling them that this "good patriot" had entered into an agreement with Prince de Croÿ, Mlle. Thuliez, Nurse Cavell and Madame Bodart for the wholesale recruiting of men for the enemies of Germany.

"That is untrue," exclaimed Baucq heatedly when the interpreter asked him if he admitted this conspiracy. "I fixed the meetings, and told these people where the guides might be found, but nothing more."

"It is suspected that you are the head of this organisation ?"

Baucq emphatically denied it.

"Why did you take the *nom de guerre* of Fromage' ?"

"So that I should not be traced too easily," was the retort obvious.

It was Madame Bodart's turn. She had to admit having lodged numerous men in her house; and when asked, at the conclusion of her interrogation, if *she* was a patriot, she replied with asperity: "It is not a shortcoming."

With interminable monotony the prisoners followed each other, remaining in court when their statements had been read out and the parrot-like interpreter had asked them the incriminating questions which would corroborate their guilt.

One could not call it a trial. Frequently the prosecutor exchanged a few pleasantries with the president, making remarks about the accused in a manner that would have appalled an English court-martial. The officers in the back of the court gazed on with interested eyes, then took to yawning as the atmosphere of the Chamber began to grow oppressive.

It was difficult to believe that these ordinary-looking folk, men and women drawn from all walks of life, could be so formidable as Dr. Stöber made out. Some of the more elderly officers grew sleepy. One by one, as the luncheon hour approached, they glanced at their watches and slipped out of the court. They wanted food.

If the people were short of most of the good things of life, the German invaders were not. At the luxurious Palace Hotel close to the Gare du Nord, where most of them lived, the menu cards would have gladdened the heart and palate of a gourmet.

Libiez came into the hall. The court-martial liked

the look of him, with his open face and quick replies. He had been incriminated by the woman Ladrière-Tellier (she who committed suicide after the war), and was forced to admit having assisted stragglers from Mons to reach Brussels, as well as informing the men that they would be helped by Nurse Cavell.

He was given no chance to explain anything: the admissions were all that Stöber wanted. Stöber leaned over to the president with smiling face, to receive an approving nod in return. Everything went on according to plan.

Capiau . . . Séverin, the friend of Nurse Cavell . . . Derveau, the chemist from Mons . . . the delicate Countess de Belleville . . . and then, by way of a contrast, the big, lumbering Louise Ladrière-Tellier. A rustle of interest swept over the spacious Chamber as the Princess de Croÿ's name was called. Everybody sat up and took notice.

The officers composing the court-martial, seated at a long table facing the prisoners, showed more animation. But it hardly seemed possible that this frail little lady, who seemed so ill after her month's confinement in the *Kommandantur* and the anxiety of the tragic events that had been taking place in her Château of Bellignies, could be still another of those dangerous enemies who were menacing the safety of the German army.

"Is it true," asked the interpreter, "that you have sheltered French and English soldiers in your house?"

No point would have been served by a denial. The Princess was already aware, from things that had slipped out during the repeated questioning to which

she had been subjected at the *Kommandantur*, that some of her fellow-captives had told all they knew of the dramatic events at Bellignies.

"Do you admit having photographed these men?"

"Yes."

"For what purpose?"

"So that they could obtain identity cards and travel on to Brussels."

"Now then," the interpreter continued, "were you aware all the time that these cards were to be used to enable these soldiers to leave Belgium?"

"As I was made to say," retorted the Princess calmly. This put Stöber in a temper. He jumped up to deny any suggestion of double-dealing on the part of Bergan and Pinkhoff.

When the storm died down, the Princess was asked why she had helped the men to escape from the war area. The court did not seem to like her reply that she wanted to save the lives of the men: that some stragglers who had not given themselves up had been shot in cold blood.

And so it went on, one incriminating question after another. Hostelet, the engineer, was brought in. His interrogation was so brief, but damning enough, that he wondered if he was to have no further opportunity of explaining many things that appeared in the statement which he had made at St. Gilles.

But no! It was sufficient for Stöber's purpose to inform the court, "*This man is a determined patriot.*" Hostelet had to admit having handed over money for recruiting purposes as well as having been in communication with several of the fellow-accused.

At this juncture his advocate, accurately sizing up the situation, interrupted the court by handing over a letter from the correspondent of a German paper to whom Hostelet had rendered some little service.

The letter was carefully read ; it seemed to make a considerable impression. Stöber nodded ; the interpreter told the prisoner that his interrogation was finished.

Lunch-time came ; the court adjourned ; the Senate Chamber emptied. The prisoners were left alone. A few of them had brought little packets of food from St. Gilles. They began to eat.

An hour passed by ; there were mutterings about the callousness of the Germans in providing nothing. The soldiers themselves, hanging about for their meal, took no notice of the talk going on around them.

Then a huge cauldron of soup arrived, with a dozen or more loaves of bread. But the prisoners had nothing in which to hold the soup ; not until the soldiers had eaten their fill and passed over the bowls they had used could they sit in the senators' chairs and assuage their hunger.

Talk became general ; the guards drifted out into the corridors to have a smoke. A bowl of boiling hot coffee arrived, but with it nothing from which it could be drunk. One of the chemists—there were no fewer than six of them on trial !—had a small tumbler with him. Everybody had a drink from it.

The talking went on. There was an occasional burst of laughter ; it might have been anything but a trial with death in the offing. Then officialdom returned. People began to drift back into the

Chamber ; the interpreter bustled in and demanded silence. The officers of the court-martial slowly filed into their seats. Stöber got up and announced that the calling of the accused would continue.

It was the turn of the smaller fry now. The morning had been devoted to the leaders. Now there filed in one by one the people who had been on the outskirts of the organisation.

Poor and ignorant folk, most of them, they gazed *about in bewildered fashion, wondering what fate had brought them to such a pass.*

The trial went wearily on ; the stories were all much of a muchness. An interlude was created when Pinkhoff was seen to pass a piece of chocolate to Louise Ladrière. Those of the prisoners who witnessed it nodded significantly to each other. It explained a great deal.

By a quarter to six—the time when the court would adjourn for the day—the first act in the farce was nearly over. The confessions and statements of all the prisoners had been read out. Stöber had evidently timed the proceedings to a nicety.

He had two more witnesses to call—the complacent Bergan, who was asked in German (which only Capiiau and Princess de Croÿ, of the prisoners, knew) whether this was not a widespread organisation for espionage as well as recruiting.

“ I could not truthfully say that,” replied the Lieutenant. “ Only two of the prisoners are actually suspected of spying. They are Baucq and Thuliez. In the house of the man was found certain information concerning munition trains leaving Cambrai.”

He gave the names of the leaders of the band as Thuliez, Baucq, Bodart, Cavell, de Croÿ, Capiau, Libiez, Derveau, Sévérin—and de Belleville.

It was perjury as far as the Countess was concerned ; her part in the whole affair had been of the slightest. But, nevertheless, it suited Stöber's purpose.

The following day he was to demand the death penalty for all the people, with one exception, mentioned by the chief of Section " B."

Then, to the astonishment of everybody in the Chamber, another name was called—that of the thirteen-year-old boy, Philippe Bodart.

The poor little chap, with his pale face and black curly hair, looked too alarmed to speak. He had been in prison for more than two months. Pinkhoff had arrested him on August 1, when he called at Baucq's house to collect a parcel of *La Libre Belgique*.

They must have scared the life out of him during those two months. It was obvious that he had been brought into court for the purpose of incriminating Mlle. Thuliez, Baucq, and his mother.

The Germans seemed to have made a dead set at the architect on account of the prominent part he had played in the production of *La Libre Belgique*, that elusive paper which, secretly distributed, was a constant irritant to the Governor-General.

To call a child as a witness against his mother seemed fair enough to Stöber. The interpreter told the boy to sit down, and after asking his name and age, warned him, on the instructions of the prosecutor, that if he gave false evidence he would be punished with ten years' penal servitude ! As though this were

not enough, he was told that he would, as a Christian, commit a mortal sin by telling any lies.

When the interpreter asked the boy if he had any parents or guardians, his distressed mother cried out : " I am his mother." She was quickly silenced. The interrogation had to go on.

In silence the prisoners heard the boy declare that Baucq, in the presence of Mlle. Thuliez and his mother, had said that he was engaged in marking out a route for soldiers on the way to Holland. Everyone sat aghast.

Baucq interrupted to say that the boy had made a mistake. Stöber took no notice. No one could ask any questions. When the prosecutor had finished with young Bodart the mother called her child over and gave him a passionate embrace. A soldier took him out, and the proceedings for the day ended.

In silence the prisoners climbed into the vans which had come from St. Gilles. Nurse Cavell seemed preoccupied. She realised now the extent to which she was incriminated.

Conversation was forbidden. The vans went rumbling through the city, their occupants looking with wistful eyes at the comparatively cheerful streets. It was difficult to imagine that some of those passengers might have little longer to live.

No one connected with the captives ever dreamed in the beginning that the charges brought against Edith Cavell and her colleagues would involve anything more serious than deportation to a German prison. There had been other cases of a similar nature. Nurse Cavell herself, as I have already indicated, thought that her fate would be three years in a fortress.

But, as time had gone on, there were whispers round Brussels that the German military authorities intended to make this an outstanding case, with penalties that would deter anybody else from embarking on recruiting.

Mr. Brand Whitlock, the courageous American minister, had gone as far as he dared in his efforts to have Nurse Cavell properly defended.

But the German police had not only declined to allow Maître de Leval, the legal adviser to the Legation, to take any part in the affair ; they had also refused to admit Maître Braun to watch the interests of the accused Englishwoman. The only counsel who could attend the court-martial were those who spoke German.

Nevertheless, it was never imagined that any question of death would arise. But when the trial reopened on the morning of October 8, the lawyers representing the prisoners were shocked when Stöber, after making a speech congratulating the secret police on the work they had done, then delivered a passionate denunciation of the principal accused as the organisers of a dangerous scheme which would seriously imperil the safety of all the Germans in Belgium.

The scene had been changed from the Senate to the *Chambre des Représentants*—the equivalent of our English House of Commons. Why, none of the prisoners could imagine. In all probability Stöber had used the Senate on the opening day merely for dramatic effect.

Neither mercy nor fairness had any part in the summing-up speech which came from him. He declared that the prisoners were nothing more than a

carefully planned organisation for sending men to the Allied fronts. In France the principals were grouped round Prince and Princess de Croÿ, the Countess de Belleville and the Lille schoolmistress, Louise Thuliez.

Capiau the engineer, Libiez the lawyer, and Derveau the chemist, who were responsible for providing the false identity papers for the men, were the leaders in the Borinage, while in Brussels the movement centred round Nurse Cavell's *clinique* in the rue de la Culture.

Louis Sévérin, Madame Bodart, Baucq, and Hostelet were actively connected with her, Baucq in particular being of much importance owing to his association with *La Libre Belgique*.

Then Stöber paused, and, amid a tense silence, went on to say that all this activity was nothing less than high treason, the punishment of which was death.

Only two of the prisoners understood what he was saying—Capiau and the Princess de Croÿ. None of them said a word; they waited in agonised silence as their prosecutor, reading from a paper in front of him, demanded nine death sentences.

"I ask," he cried in ringing voice, "for sentence of death to be passed upon Cavell, Baucq, Thuliez, Sévérin, Capiau, Libiez, Derveau, de Belleville, and Bodart."

Then he went on to the lesser penalties suggested. (Could one imagine such a thing in an English court of law?) The Princess de Croÿ must be kept in penal servitude for ten years; Hostelet, "that determined patriot," as Stöber still persisted in calling him, also ten years. Little Auguste Joly, the miner, should have ten years; Maurice Crabbe and his wife five years

apiece ; similar terms for Godefroy the jeweller and the two café proprietors, Pansaers and Mathieu. The list seemed interminable.

The officers sitting on the court-martial seemed disgusted. Most of them were family men ; they listened to the vindictive prosecutor rolling out his punishments with faces which now and then revealed, perhaps—who knows ?—the thought that all this might have happened in Germany, and that they, instead of the hapless Belgians in front of them, might have been sitting in a court waiting for judgment upon them.

But they were merely figureheads, puppets placed there at the selection of the Military Governor, to do no more than they were told. Not a word had been heard from them as to how these marvellous confessions had been extracted ; the spectacle of not a single witness for the defence also passed without question.

It was undoubtedly the hour of Stöber's triumph ; he, if no one else, appeared to be enjoying himself immensely. Bergan and Pinkhoff sat there with expressionless faces, while at the back of the Chamber stood Otto Mayer, shamefaced for once in his life.

Nurse Cavell still seemed quite unperturbed. She gazed straight before her, showing neither fear nor emotion. Philippe Baucq, his nerves completely unstrung, buried his face in his hands as he heard the one word they all understood—*Todestraf* (death penalty). Mlle. Thuliez seemed dazed. Poor old Sévérin, the chemist, agitatedly dropped some papers he had been holding.

\* \* \* \* \*

Another pause. . . . Now the interpreter was on his feet to repeat the sentence demands. Once more were the names rolled out. One of the women fainted ; she had been announced not guilty, and the strain had been too much for her.

Stöber was not finished ; he rose to his feet again, this time to inform the advocates who had sat through the trial that they were now graciously permitted to speak a few words on behalf of their clients—but merely in extenuation. No witnesses would be permitted.

Maître Alfred Dorff, who spoke German fluently, appealed for mercy in the cases of Baucq, Libiez, Capiou, and Hostelet ; he pleaded patriotism and humanity, and insisted that while punishment must be inflicted, it should be in proportion to the fault, which was merely an offence, not a crime.

Hermann Capiou got up to say that Nurse Cavell had made a mistake in asserting that he had given her 1,000 francs to help the cause ; he had actually given nothing. There was a brief interlude. Stöber spoke to the interpreter, who thereupon called the English-woman forward.

She stood up, and there were many pitying glances in her direction. But she seemed entirely oblivious of the people round her. Calm, almost icy in her manner, she said : “ It’s quite true ; I remember now that M. Capiou did not give me any money.”

“ Then why,” asked the interpreter, “ did you tell a lie ? ”

Nurse Cavell looked at him in sublime contempt.

“ My memory was at fault ; it was not until after-

wards that I recollected what had happened." She sat down. The Princess de Croÿ, touched by the unselfish generosity of the action, impulsively leaned over and grasped her hand, pressing it warmly. The soldier sitting between them again wrenched their hands apart.

Libiez was asked if he had anything to say in remission of his forthcoming sentence. Baucq followed . . . the recollection of *La Libre Belgique* and its stinging sarcasms were too much. The judges would have none of him. His death was inevitable.

Unconscious humour happened with Hostelet. He made a long—and very logical—appeal, which the interpreter abruptly cut short by saying: "Do you want a lesser sentence?" When the engineer said he did, the interpreter mentioned the fact to the President. The latter gravely made a note that Hostelet would like something less than ten years; and the proceedings continued on their way unmindful of such trifles.

Maître Kirschen's speech on behalf of Nurse Cavell was a powerful effort—but a wasted one. It had already been made clearly evident that she would receive no mercy. The fact that Dr. Stöber had opened the case with her proved beyond all doubt that the Germans intended her fate to be a warning to women not to meddle with the security of the German army.

Nurse Cavell neither flinched nor pleaded for mercy when asked if she wished to say anything on her own behalf. Kirschen had pleaded that it would have been better for her to have been judged by psychologists than by men of law.

Kirschen ended his address impressively : " I have the consolation of knowing that you will not be more severe with this woman than other German judges have been in similar cases, when they commuted the death sentence to one of imprisonment. That penalty would keep Miss Cavell from harming the Germans till the end of the war."

He sat down ; the stony faces of the five men who sat at the long table in front of him showed little or no compassion.

It was Nurse Cavell's turn to plead for herself. Off-handedly, as though it did not greatly matter, the interpreter demanded to know whether she wished to add anything.

Calm, with contempt in her voice for the whole affair, she refused to ask for mercy.

" I have nothing to say," was all she would reply, and by the tone of her voice it was fully evident that she realised that any words she uttered were completely wasted.

Madame Bodart came next.

In heavy mourning—her husband had just died—she begged for leniency. She had two children ; would they spare her life for the sake of the little ones ? The officers looked uncomfortable ; perhaps they were thinking of their own children.

Sévérin the chemist, the one who had possibly known Nurse Cavell better than anybody else, tried to speak, but broke down under the strain.

Then came the most poignant episode of the whole trial—something that brought tears to the eyes of many a person in the court. Maître Braun had risen

to his feet to make a plea on behalf of the Princess de Croÿ and her old friend the Countess de Belleville. As soon as he had finished, the Princess herself stood up.

Her pale, aristocratic face, her frail figure, and the black clothes she wore in memory of that courageous old grandmother who had passed away at Bellignies during her imprisonment, compelled many a catch in the breath as she rose to plead—not for herself, but for Nurse Cavell.

“It is necessary,” said the Princess in her quiet voice, “that we should take the responsibility of our own acts. I wish to take those which devolve on me. It has been maintained that Miss Cavell is at the head of a conspiracy, and that she has been engaged in the recruiting of English and French soldiers. That is an error. It is because she was forced by us to shelter them that she provided a refuge in the first place. She told us that it would not be wise for her to lodge other men; her *clinique* would be in danger if we again asked her assistance.

“Despite this,” continued the Princess, “we sent other men to her, my brother and I. And our comrades did as we did. It was against her better judgment that she did the deed of which she is now accused. It is not on her, but on us, that the greatest responsibility should be placed.”

The Princess concluded by saying that, as for herself, she was ready to take whatever punishment might be coming to her. All she begged was that Nurse Cavell should not be too harshly treated.

Her unselfish appeal passed unheeded. Nurse Cavell's fate was sealed.

At last the ordeal came to an end. The appeals were over ; the judges rose from their seats and left the chamber. Maître Kirschen went over to speak to Nurse Cavell.

"It is *verboden*," said a soldier harshly. But he could not stop them shaking hands, nor prevent the grateful look that flashed into Nurse Cavell's face. She walked away, as Maître Kirschen afterwards related, dignified and calm, a picture of duty and sacrifice. That was the last he ever saw of her ; they shot her a few days later.

\* \* \* \* \*

The court had cleared ; the prisoners stood waiting for the prison vans that would again take them to St. Gilles. And from there, where would they go ? Some to the sinister plot of land that lay within the confines of the Tir National, where only a fortnight previously two Belgian patriots, Baekelmans and Franck, had been executed by the Germans.

Most of the prisoners were silent. Philippe Baucq, hopeless, remarked to Hostelet that he also had a charge of espionage to answer.

"My fate is sealed," he exclaimed despairingly. He, as well as Louise Thuliez, was overpowered by the knowledge that even if the Germans reprieved him for recruiting, there was death awaiting him for the affair of the munition trains at Cambrai.

Nurse Cavell seemed as pale and composed as ever. She spoke but little as their 'bus trundled through the teeming streets, filled with people returning from *déjeuner*. The cafés were crowded, and had it not

## EDITH CAVELL

been for the grey uniforms of the German soldiery, one could have believed that Brussels was its normal self. The trees along the boulevards were bright with autumn's tints; the sun still shone warmly, and Nurse Cavell said with a sigh: "To think that all this should happen on such a perfect day."

## CHAPTER XIII

**N**O BELGIAN NEWSPAPER in those appalling times ever dared to make the slightest allusion to the innumerable acts of butchery and brigandage committed by the "occupant."

The proceedings of all the so-called War Councils were quite unknown to the public until their sentences had been executed, and sometimes remained undivulged even then. Worse still, the Germans did not deign to inform the lawyers who appeared for prisoners what fate was likely to overtake their clients. Only very occasionally would they tell a pertinacious advocate that someone had been transported to Germany.

There were times, true, in cases of espionage, where someone who had been doomed to death was permitted to receive relatives the night before the execution. In most of these instances, when sentence of death had been promulgated and approved by the Military Governor, the shooting took place the following morning.

The sentences asked for in the Cavell case remained in abeyance over the week-end which came after October 8, a Friday. Although the Belgian lawyers all knew that the death penalty had been demanded in nine instances it is doubtful whether any of them believed that the Germans would actually carry the sentences out.

Maître Kirschen, whom the Germans had deputed to defend Nurse Cavell, may have possessed some knowledge that death awaited the Englishwoman. Whether he did or not, there is no doubt that during that fateful week-end he made no effort whatever to inform the American minister, or, indeed, any other neutral diplomat who might be induced to make a strong protest to the German authorities.

In passing, one might remark that after the war, when many aspects of *l'affaire Cavell* were being investigated, Maître de Leval, a thorn in the side of the Germans if ever there was one, roundly and openly accused Kirschen of concealing from Mr. Brand Whitlock and himself the fact that he knew Nurse Cavell was to die.

This quarrel grew so bitter that it eventually led to blows, and the *batonnier* of the Belgian Bar had to be called in to effect a reconciliation. Of Kirschen let it suffice to say, as we can of two of the women whose repeated confessions so badly incriminated Nurse Cavell, *de mortuis nil nisi bonum*.

There was an ominous quiet immediately following the court-martial. Neither Mr. Whitlock nor Maître de Leval anticipated that judgment would be pronounced until some little time later. Saturday passed without incident. In Nurse Cavell's *clinique* Sister Wilkins and the other girls waited in an agony of fear for news of their beloved matron.

For two months they had themselves been prisoners, for the prohibition that the secret police had placed on their moving out of doors was still in force.

Nobody knew what had happened. Brussels was

alive with rumours that wholesale condemnations to death had taken place. But the Germans kept silence.

On the Sunday morning the disquieting news reached Maître de Leval that some of the death sentences asked for by the prosecutor had been sanctioned by the court-martial and confirmed by the Military Governor, General von Sauberzweig. Edith Cavell, Louise Thuliez, Louis Sévérin, the ailing Countess of Belleville, and Philippe Baucq were to die.

Maître de Leval hurriedly called upon the American minister with the news. Mr. Brand Whitlock could hardly believe his ears, and remarked that he did not think the sentences would be carried out.

It was more or less difficult to do anything on Sunday. For the time being the matter was left in abeyance. Maître de Leval said he would communicate with the lawyer who had been defending Miss Cavell, asking that any news should be sent to him immediately. Even then, neither Mr. Whitlock nor Maître de Leval believed that the judgments of the court had been confirmed by the Military Governor.

But it was all too true. The official dossier reveals that on October 10, 1915, von Sauberzweig attached his signature to the long list of punishments that had been recommended by the court-martial. With a secrecy that bears its own explanation, the judgment of the court had been transmitted to the Military Governor the day before, and confirmed, just as quietly, by von Sauberzweig on the Sunday.

Now follows a significant chain of events which clearly indicates that the Germans were determined

that Nurse Cavell should die without any further intervention by the American minister.

It is evident, from the dossier, that von Sauberzweig had confirmed all the sentences in the case on Sunday, October 10.

There is no necessity to set them out in detail. There were five death sentences, four of fifteen years' penal servitude—Madame Bodart, Hermann Capiau, Albert Libiez, and Georges Derveau being the victims—with varying terms for the other prisoners. The Princess de Croÿ was sentenced to ten years.

In the twenty-four hours that elapsed between Sunday and Monday mornings, von Sauberzweig had come to the conclusion that if he wanted to carry out any of the executions he had better do so before the storm broke. There is one document in the official dossier of more importance than any other, though it lacks the single detail that might have proved so much—the time at which it was signed. This is the document :

*Brussels, October 11th, 1915.*

I consider that the immediate (this word was underlined in red pencil) execution of the death penalty against

EDITH CAVELL  
PHILIPPE BAUCQ

is necessary in the interests of the State, and I order it by this document.

I adjourn the execution of the penalty against the other accused condemned to death until a decision has been reached with regard to the pending appeal.

(signed) VON SAUBERZWEIG,  
*Major-General.*

Rumours that the prisoners would soon hear their fate had been buzzing round the jail all Monday

morning. The Belgian jailors putting the dinners into the cells whispered to the captives that in the afternoon they would probably know their fate.

"I think," said the man in charge of the hall where Nurse Cavell's cell lay, "you will hear something this afternoon. There are whispers in the office that the Military Auditor is coming to the prison to read your sentences."

Nurse Cavell smiled bravely. If there was fear in her heart she never betrayed it.

"I can guess what my fate will be," she said quietly. "I have already made up my mind." She would not touch her dinner, telling the man he might take it away.

Four o'clock came. There was much rattling and unlocking of doors. One by one the prisoners, guarded by soldiers, were let out of their cells and taken down to the long room near the front of the jail where in normal times the Director held court.

They all assembled at last, thirty-five of them. Some looked disheartened, others uneasy. The nine people against whom sentence of death had been demanded had not yet heard how many of the death penalties had been commuted. Philippe Baucq, still distressed by thoughts of his wife and family, was overwrought.

Nurse Cavell came in, her face showing nothing of the emotions that must have possessed her. She was icily calm.

"Silence!" commanded the interpreter. In came the prosecutor, Dr. Stöber. He was followed by the German Kommandant of the prison and a chaplain.

One could have heard a pin drop as Stöber took out from the leather case he carried a big sheet of paper and began reading.

There were five sentences of death, announced amid a dramatic silence. One of the prisoners who was acquitted, Pansaers, the café proprietor, had already hanged himself in the prison. Poor Madame Crabbe, also found not guilty, fainted with the shock. Most of the others were too stunned to utter a word.

And then came that historic episode, which revealed so clearly the courage of Edith Cavell. Georges Hostelet, whom Stöber had so constantly described as "that determined patriot"—he had received five years—saw the Englishwoman, calm and collected, standing against the wall. He went up and uttered some words of sympathy.

"You will appeal?" asked Hostelet.

Nurse Cavell looked at him as though she had already abandoned hope.

"It would be useless," she replied. "I am English, and they want my life."

Before Hostelet had time to say anything further, one of the prison officials came up and said: "Madoiselle, there is something I must tell you. Will you kindly follow me?"

He escorted the Englishwoman out of the room. Then he told her that she had but little time to live. Her execution had been ordered for the morning, and she must make her peace with God in the brief period available.

Father le Seur, the Evangelical German pastor at the prison, has set out what happened after Edith

Cavell had been sentenced to death :

"Immediately after the reading out of the sentence, I led Miss Cavell to a side-room. In order to help matters a little for her, I had offered to tell her myself that the sentence was to be carried out the following morning.

"It was intolerably difficult for me to carry out my task. She herself came to my aid :

" 'How much time will they give me ? ' she asked.

" 'Unfortunately, only until to-morrow morning.'

"For one moment her cheeks were flushed, and a moist film passed over her eyes—but only for a few seconds. I offered her my services as a pastor, and told her that I was at her disposal at any hour of the day or night. She declined them, however, politely but definitely."

She had obviously made up her mind not to break down. The Pastor pleaded with her.

"I do not want you to see in me now the German," he begged. "I am only the servant of our Lord and Saviour, and I place myself entirely at your disposal."

The Englishwoman gave him a grateful smile. But she shook her head and told him that the only service he could render her would be to inform her eighty-year-old mother in England by letter of what was about to take place. She feared the effect of the shock if her mother read of her death in the newspapers.

The Pastor promised her he would carry out her wishes.

"I understand," he said gently, "your aversion to receiving any spiritual aid from a German, and especially from a man who is not of your own Church.

But if it will be any consolation to you, Fräulein, I think I might obtain permission for your own chaplain to visit you. It has not been possible for me to do so before."

This deeply religious woman, whose faith had been her standby all through the long and arduous period when she had been risking her life to save the sick and suffering, revealed then the first sign of emotion that she had permitted herself since her arrest.

"I shall be more than grateful to you," she said simply. "There is no other favour that I have to ask."

Before the Pastor left her, he told her that he would, if she wished it, make an attempt to have her attended at her death by the British chaplain. But Nurse Cavell would not have it. "No, no," she said. "Mr. Gahan has already enough to suffer. I shall be satisfied if he is able to come here to-night."

And so they parted. The Pastor asked if he might call for her at the prison the following morning instead of having to meet her at the Tir National, where she would face the firing party.

"It would be more than kind of you," was her reply, and by her calm voice one would have thought that she was merely assenting to a commonplace request. It seemed, in truth, that she was indeed glad to die for her country, as she said in her last message to the world.

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What words can adequately describe the last hours of this brave-hearted woman, and the haste with which she was hurried to her doom?

What excuses, if any, can be found for the lies of the officials of the Political Department in saying that judgment upon Nurse Cavell had not yet been rendered and that when it had been the American minister would at once be informed ?

Pastor le Seur says that on the Sunday, before one o'clock, he met Dr. Stöber, and was told by him that his services would be required on the following day for the English nurse, Edith Cavell, who had been condemned to death, and was to be shot almost at once.

The Pastor, agitated at the thought of the impending shame to his country, wrote a guarded note to the British chaplain. "An English lady who has not long to live," ran the message, "wishes to see you and receive Holy Communion. Come to me at once."

Mr. Gahan was out when the note arrived. It was eight o'clock before he came in, and, without any loss of time, never dreaming for one moment that the Pastor was referring to his friend, Nurse Cavell, he hastened to the German cleric's house.

Pastor le Seur asked Mr. Gahan if he knew Nurse Cavell.

"Very well indeed," replied Mr. Gahan, still far from anticipating what was coming.

"It is my painful duty to inform you," said the Pastor, "that Miss Cavell has been condemned to death and is to be shot to-morrow morning."

In Nurse Cavell's *clinique*, almost at the same time, Sister Elizabeth Wilkins was hearing the same tragic news. A German-speaking Swiss probationer who had been fraternising with the German staff of St. Gilles had come flying back to the rue de la Culture

with the information that their deeply loved matron was to die at dawn next morning.

Sister Wilkins had confirmed the news, and then, desperately seeking the only avenue of hope that remained open, sought out Maître de Leval to see whether or not something could be done, even now, to prevent the execution of Miss Cavell.

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I must go back a little, in order to make clear how deliberately Nurse Cavell was being done to death, and the pains that were being taken to prevent the officials of the American Legation from knowing it.

As I have already stated, it was some time during Sunday, October 10, that General von Sauberzweig had ordered the execution of the Englishwoman and Philippe Baucq. The following day, probably after he had discussed the matter with the Governor-General and the Political Minister (Baron von der Lancken), it was resolved that the two condemned persons should be disposed of without any unnecessary loss of time—hence the underlining of the word “immediate” in the order which he signed.

What this precious trio intended to do was to present the American authorities with a *fait accompli*; and not only that, but von der Lancken was instructed to inform the subordinates in his department, if urgent enquiry were made, that they had no knowledge of the executions being carried out straightway.

On Monday morning, Maître de Leval got to hear that von Sauberzweig had sanctioned the executions. He at once telephoned the Political Department and

spoke to Conrad, one of the principal officials, requesting that the English chaplain should be permitted to see Miss Cavell in prison. Conrad said that as yet no sentence had been pronounced by the Military Governor, and that a day or two would probably elapse before any decision was reached.

This, as subsequent events were to prove, was a flagrant lie. Conrad went on to add that the Governor-General was absent from Brussels, and that it would be a matter of something like three days before he returned. He said he would keep the Legation fully informed of all that was happening.

Mr. Hugh Gibson, the Secretary to the Legation, overheard all this conversation ; he fully agreed with Maître de Leval that gross trickery was being practised. Neither of them believed that Conrad would keep his promise ; in a state of the gravest possible apprehension they remained at the Legation all day, telephoning the Political Department every hour to ascertain if any news had come through. On each occasion Conrad faithfully promised them that they would be informed immediately.

As the afternoon wore on their anxiety increased. Maître de Leval spoke to one of his legal colleagues and received no reassuring news. Death was undoubtedly in the air, and no one knew for certain on whom the blow would fall.

Half-past six came, and once more Conrad was questioned, only to affirm in a tired voice that he knew nothing.

Mr. Brand Whitlock was ill in bed with influenza. Shortly before eight o'clock, when Mr. Gibson had

gone home, a message came to the Legation from the Minister conveying the ominous tidings that Sister Wilkins and another girl from the *clinique* had called at his house to inform him that Nurse Cavell was to die in the morning. He had sent them on to the lawyer's house in the Avenue Toison d'Or, where Maître de Leval found them awaiting him.

Obviously there was no time to be lost ; as soon as he had satisfied himself that the news was all too true, Maître de Leval got into his car and drove to Mr. Gibson's residence to make a last desperate appeal to Baron von der Lancken. Mr. Whitlock had further requested him to enlist also the aid of the Marquis de Villalobar, the Spanish minister.

The two men set off for Villalobar's house, only to find that he was dining elsewhere. They ascertained the address, that of Baron Lambert's house, and their agitated manner speedily convinced the Marquis that his help was urgently needed.

But on arriving at the house where the German Political Minister had his headquarters, they were dismayed to be told that von der Lancken and his staff were out spending the evening at a theatre. The manservant who answered their ring professed himself unable to name the place ; however, Maître de Leval was in no mood to stand any further lying. He threatened the man with dire consequences if he did not go off and find his master.

Grumbling under his breath, the man gave way. He was instructed to take the car waiting outside, while the three callers walked into the drawing-room and composed themselves to wait as best they could.

If any doubt remained about Nurse Cavell being hurriedly executed it was completely dissipated by the length of time that von der Lancken kept them waiting. A five minutes' drive, at the most, was sufficient for the servant to have reached his destination ; but it was half-past ten before the Baron came in, accompanied by two of his aides, Count Harrach and Baron von Falkenhausen.

In a highly displeased voice he asked the reason of their presence. Mr. Gibson briefly informed him why they had come, and handed over a note Mr. Brand Whitlock had written begging him to intercede before it was too late.

Von der Lancken read the note through, and then said : " I know nothing about the case, and I am quite certain that this woman will not be shot to-morrow morning. I am rather surprised," he went on, " that you should believe such preposterous stories."

Both Mr. Gibson and Maître de Leval told him they had no reason to doubt the truth of what they had heard, and urged him to find out for himself what was actually happening.

His reply to this was : " Where did you obtain this information ? I must insist on knowing."

If his words and manner were to be believed, it was quite impossible for the death sentence to have been pronounced so soon ; and in any event, as all the Government offices were closed for the night, he could do nothing before morning.

" The morning will be too late," retorted Mr. Gibson sharply.

" Why not go home," suggested von der Lancken,

"have a good sleep, and come back to-morrow when you are in a more reasonable frame of mind?"

All this time Maître de Leval had been trying to curb his fast-rising anger. At the mention of going to bed all his pent-up wrath burst out.

"This is murder you are committing," he cried. "It does not seem possible that any man could stand there, as you are doing, pretending that you are ignorant of this foul deed which is to be done."

The little party was speechless at the outburst, even von der Lancken. Looking as though he would like to strike the lawyer dead, he finally agreed to telephone to the Kommandant of Brussels to find out if it were indeed true that Nurse Cavell would shortly be facing a firing squad.

He came back a few minutes later with a face that told its own story. The Kommandant had informed him that the news was true.

"What is it you want me to do?" he asked, with a sardonic note in his voice stressing the word "me."

At first Maître de Leval, then Mr. Gibson, and finally the Spanish Minister, begged him to use all the influence he possessed to save the Englishwoman. They told him she was already in prison, and that nothing would be gained by shooting her. Such an act would do Germany more harm than good, and England would not be slow to make use of such an unsavoury affair.

Maître de Leval uttered strong words about the failure of the Political Department to keep them informed of what was actually taking place, adding that the lying and the subterfuge indulged in by

Conrad was sufficient in itself to prove that Nurse Cavell would be shot before any interference could take place.

When Mr. Gibson remarked that after the burning of Louvain and the sinking of the *Lusitania*, the killing of an English nurse would evoke throughout the world still further horror at German frightfulness, von der Lancken replied with a sneer that in his opinion the effect would be excellent.

Here one of his aides, Count Harrach, thought fit to interrupt the protests with the remark that he felt sorry that they did not have three or four old Englishwomen to shoot !

The Marquis de Villalobar, up to now, had not said a great deal. It was evident to him that von der Lancken would do nothing, whereupon he angrily suggested that if no one in Belgium would intercede there was no reason why German General Headquarters at Charleville should not be telephoned to and the German Emperor approached direct.

Von der Lancken did not like the idea at all. Sarcas-  
tically he said to the Marquis : " I can't do that sort of thing. I am not a friend of the Kaiser, and I would not dare risk his displeasure."

An hour passed by, and Nurse Cavell's life still hung by a thread. Von der Lancken ostentatiously began to yawn, and finally, hoping to get rid of his unwelcome visitors, offered to go and find von Sauberzweig to obtain a definite reply one way or the other.

Another half-hour went, the time being passed in abortively trying to impress upon the two aides a point of view of which they plainly disapproved. The

Political Minister came back, to say that he had seen the Military Governor, who had informed him that he had confirmed the death sentences in the cases of Nurse Cavell and Philippe Baucq after a full consideration, and that in no circumstances would he listen to any appeal for clemency.

The Marquis de Villalobar again asked that the Kaiser should be telephoned to.

Von der Lancken shook his head decidedly, saying : " Even the Emperor himself would not dare to intervene now."

Then happened an extraordinary scene. The Marquis de Villalobar, a man upon whom nature had inflicted cruel disabilities from birth, but who was, nevertheless, of unquenchable courage and charm, took the big Prussian into an adjoining room, and, grabbing him by the lapel of his coat, shook him fiercely as he cried out : " You cannot do this. It will be on your conscience for the rest of your days. You are killing a woman in cold blood, and the world will call you an assassin ! "

Nothing would move von der Lancken. He came back into the drawing-room looking badly shaken—as he literally had been—to find Mr. Gibson and Maître de Leval still hammering away at the two aides.

All in vain. At midnight, when it was evident that all their efforts were hopeless, they reluctantly left, after Maître de Leval had made one last appeal with a pathos which must have touched anybody not utterly lost to all feelings of mercy.

It was a waste of time ; von der Lancken led the way to the door, and with an ironical " Good-night ! "

hypocritically expressed his sorrow at being unable to do anything.

\* \* \* \* \*

Soft, drizzling rain was falling as the three men reached the street. Silently they got into the waiting car and were driven back to the Legation, there to find four nurses from the *clinique* waiting for them.

They had been there for four hours, comforted by Mrs. Gahan and Mrs. Whitlock, hoping against hope. Poor little Gracie Jemmett, who had been a patient of Nurse Cavell's, was also present, prostrate with grief.

One look at the faces of the three men told them that all was lost. Mutely they heard that a few hours hence the Englishwoman would die. Mrs. Whitlock gave the four nurses a stiff drink and then gently begged them to go home. Eventually they left, with Sister Wilkins declaring that, cost what it would, she would be on hand outside St. Gilles to see the last of her beloved friend.

Maître de Leval, equally distraught, was driven home by Mr. Gibson, who then came back to the Legation and walked the neighbouring streets for several hours, thinking of nothing but the scene that was now so near. His mind reeled with the horror of it.

#### CHAPTER XIV

WHILE ALL THESE LAST DESPERATE EFFORTS were being made to save Nurse Cavell's life, the British chaplain in Brussels was already at the prison of St. Gilles in the doomed woman's cell.

Time was speeding on. It was nearly ten o'clock before Mr. Gahan arrived, to find Edith Cavell waiting to receive Holy Communion at his hands. She had, indeed, practically given up thoughts of seeing him. She was lying on the narrow truckle bed when the German guard knocked at her door to admit the chaplain, but she jumped up, the picture of alertness and cheerfulness, when she recognised her visitor.

No trembling coward was this Englishwoman, no human being whose spirit would quail at the prospect of the cold and cheerless death which awaited her so soon. She spoke in her normal tones; the gratitude she displayed was almost unnerving in its warmth.

The guard, with touching courtesy, gently closed the door and stood outside in the corridor, after telling the chaplain that time was no consideration.

She had no complaints to make. With that self-sacrifice typical of her modest nature she offered no criticism of her trial, nor of the frightful punishment inflicted on her. Quietly she went on to tell her countryman, in words which she little thought would become world-famous, that patriotism was not enough,

that one must love all men and hate none. She was not afraid of death ; she had seen it so often and been in touch with it so much.

They had partaken of the Sacrament together, and then repeated the Lord's Prayer. Slowly the chaplain whispered the first verse of the hymn that was so appropriate to this solemn occasion :

Abide with me, fast falls the eventide,  
The darkness deepens, Lord with me abide.

Then, for a short time, they talked, discussing many things over which one must draw a veil. It was close on midnight before a discreet knock at the door warned them that the visit must come to an end. They took an affecting farewell of each other, Edith Cavell calm and completely courageous. It was the chaplain, indeed, who was on the verge of breaking down.

She spent the remaining hours in a calmness of spirit typical of the heroic manner which had characterised her from the day of her arrest. Just as dawn was breaking the prisoners in the cells on either side of No. 23 heard a light knock at her door. Then came the rattle of a heavy key.

One of the grey-coated jailers admitted the German pastor, Paul le Seur, into her cell. As she had said to Mr. Gahan : " I have no fear or shrinking. I have seen death so often that it is not strange or fearful to me. I thank God for this ten weeks' quiet before the end. Life has always been hurried and full of difficulty. This time of rest has been a great mercy. They have all been very kind to me here. But this I would say, standing as I do in the view of God and

Eternity—I realise that patriotism is not enough. I must have no hatred or bitterness toward anyone.”

It was a sight at once pitiful and noble that met the pastor’s eyes. Edith Cavell, pale as usual, and dressed in a shabby little coat and skirt, an old-fashioned hat on her head, stood waiting. At her feet was a small leather bag. In it she had placed the few valueless articles which she had been allowed to use during those ten long weary weeks in prison.

Confident, she stood there. She knew she was to die. But the spiritual fires within her burned as brightly as ever; the courage that had uplifted and strengthened her in the hours of agony and torment was unshaken. Though the rifles of her executioners were loaded and ready, she was unafraid. As she had lived—calm, assured, and noble—so she would die.

“Abide with me!” Well, she was prepared to meet her Maker. For her life had been one long story of self-sacrifice. She had devoted all her love and gentleness to others. And now she was to die by the decree of the Military Governor of Brussels, von Sauberzweig.

All through the long-drawn-out hours of her last night the gaslight had burned in the condemned cell. The German officials were determined that there should be no repetition of that scandalous suicide which had claimed the life of one of the other prisoners connected with the Cavell case.

A few withered flowers stood on a shelf. They were a gift from the nurses in the *clinique*. She had already written her last letters. Firmly and surely she had given directions as to how her poor little

possessions were to be disposed of. There was a missive for Sister Wilkins in which she said :

Mr. Gahan will give you 20 francs from me to pay my little debts. Miss J. (Miss Jemmett) owes me (she will remember) 100 francs. Take it to buy a clock for the entrance hall ; it was given to me by Mr. Mayer.

At the end of the daily account book you will see the Red Cross accounts, money spent out from the school funds but not entered, which should have been covered by the two cheques I told you of, and which are not entered either.

I am asking you to take charge of my will and a few things for me. You have been very kind, my dear, and I thank you and the nurses for all you have done for me in these last ten weeks.

My love to you all. I am not afraid, but quite happy.

Yours,

E. CAVELL.

She wrote another letter to her aged mother, and to her cousin and playmate of her girlhood days a diary setting out the principal events of her life. The diary was written on the fly-leaf of a copy of the *Imitation of Christ*, the book which had been such a solace to her during her long imprisonment.

In those last few days—even before she knew definitely that her death had been decreed—she had no doubts about her fate. She wrote in French a last letter to her nurses, while in the diary, no doubt having in mind the extent to which she had been incriminated by other people, she wrote : “ It is no small prudence to keep silence in an evil time. It were more than just that thou shouldst accuse thyself and excuse thy brother.”

When the German pastor's knock sounded she had been kneeling at a little wooden table in her cell, communing with God.

The pastor stood outside the cell; he gazed at her for a few moments, marvelling at her unflinching courage. Then he said quietly: "The time has come, Fräulein."

"I am ready," was Nurse Cavell's reply.

With the pastor at her side she walked down the long and dreary corridor toward the prison gates, meeting on the way Belgian jailers who stood aside and took off their caps in silent homage.

\* \* \* \* \*

The war slowly dragged on to its bitter end. Five months after the Germans had evacuated Brussels there gathered at the Tir National to pay tribute to the memory of Nurse Cavell and the other patriots who had died at the hand of the enemy in Brussels, hundreds of famous people.

The King and Queen of the Belgians were present, accompanied by the ambassadors of all the Allied nations.

In silence the relatives of the victims were presented to the King and Queen. Baron Carton de Wiart delivered the oration, a strongly moving speech which brought tears to the eyes of the people assembled there. All through the day the citizens of Belgium filed past the memorial which had already been erected.

King George and Queen Mary had previously come over from England in company with Field-Marshal

Earl Haig, and visited Nurse Cavell's rude grave exactly as the Germans had left it. They were then informed that in due course her body would be disinterred and taken back to her native land.

So, in May, 1919, the mortal remains of Edith Cavell were placed in a coffin covered with the Union Jack and carried on a gun-carriage to the Gare du Nord in Brussels, where a special train was waiting.

A *chapelle ardente* was erected inside the station, and there, before the Commanders-in-Chief of the Allied armies and a vast gathering of notabilities of the victorious nations, the Reverend H. S. T. Gahan conducted that impressive memorial service which was such a fitting tribute to the greatest heroine of the war.

The funeral train arrived at Ostend. There was a procession through the streets lined with Belgian troops. And then the coffin was taken aboard a British destroyer to be conveyed to Dover.

Another special train awaited it, and on arriving in London the cortège was met by a detachment of troops, who, with muffled drums, escorted the coffin to Westminster Abbey.

There, as had been done in honour of so many distinguished Britons, a funeral service was held in memory of the woman whose martyrdom had brought her undying fame.

The congregation sang the same hymn that she and the chaplain had whispered together in the cell at St. Gilles on the night before her death :

Abide with me, fast falls the eventide ;  
The darkness deepens ; Lord, with me abide.

EDITH CAVELL

The organ played the Dead March in *Saul*, the buglers sounded the sad strains of the Last Post and then the Reveille.

It was Journey's End. Edith Cavell had come home.

## CHAPTER XV

THERE HAVE BEEN LEGENDS INNUMERABLE concerning those last grim scenes at the Tir National when Edith Cavell and Philippe Baucq met their doom.

Shortly after the Great War a film was produced in England which portrayed a German soldier refusing to fire on the Englishwoman. But if one accepts the evidence of those who were actually present on that fateful morning of October 12, 1915, nothing of the sort occurred.

The story went—and it gained currency all over Belgium when the bodies of those who had died at the Tir National were being disinterred to give them burial in consecrated ground—that this soldier, crying out that he would not shoot a woman, had himself been shot dead on the spot with an officer's pistol.

One must discount such a possibility for the reason that all the firing parties chosen by the Germans were composed of men who had already been in battle—even if they were not volunteers. The *caserne* directly opposite the Tir National was always filled with enemy troops who had been at the front: case-hardened brutes for the most part, who stole with impunity and were all too ready to wreak vengeance on the hapless Belgians.

How, then, did the story originate? After the

enemy had evacuated Brussels it was possible for the Allied authorities to investigate those poor, rude, little graves, each of them marked with a wooden cross, which lay in front of a mound formerly used by the men of the Belgian forces in their shooting practice.

One of the coffins brought up was found to contain the body of a man in German uniform, the features quite unrecognisable. Somehow or other rumours flew round Brussels that this was the man supposed to have refused to fire at Nurse Cavell. Little by little the fable grew; within a few weeks every second person in Brussels had a version to tell the gossips.

This, however, is the truth. Some few weeks before Nurse Cavell's execution, the secret police in Brussels had, after months of hard work, discovered that a German soldier, Rammlere by name, on duty at the Zeppelin sheds at Evere, had been imparting to Allied agents employed in what was known as the "Telegraphists' Organisation," information of immense value to England. He was revealing when the Zeppelins would be going off on those death-dealing raids which created such havoc in 1915-16.

I suppose we shall never know the heroic work that was done by the Belgian Secret Service people in smuggling this intelligence out of the country. It had to be taken across the frontier into Holland, with death in the offing all the time, and from Flushing transmitted to London.

However, in due course, after several of their giant

airships had been attacked and destroyed, the German secret police traced the culprit. They were not quite sure of him, with the result that they enlisted the services of a renegade Belgian as *agent provocateur*. What particularly incensed the Germans was the destruction of one of their Zeppelins by a gallant British airman, Lieutenant Warneford, who had flown over Brussels early on a spring morning and bombed a newly arrived craft.

They got their man all right, although they did not try him immediately and shoot him as they might have done. Instead, they used him for some weeks in an attempt to trap people in the Allied Secret Service who were involved in this highly dangerous work. Then, when they had finished with him, he was court-martialled, sentenced to death, and shot at the Tir National about a month before Nurse Cavell and Philippe Baucq were called upon to pay the penalty of their patriotic deeds.

It may be that the legend of this Ramlere's death was already being told in Brussels during the occupation. Certain it is that as soon as the Belgian Government could exhume the bodies of those brave people who had sacrificed their lives in fighting the invaders, they also found the corpse of a man in the uniform of a German soldier, who was presumed to be the individual who had mutinied on the morning the Englishwoman met her death.

Even the aristocratic Baron von der Lancken, who, in his memoirs, expressed disapproval of Nurse Cavell's execution, did not escape the legend-mongers. Soon after the Englishwoman's death a Paris paper printed

a cartoon which showed His Excellency at the Tir National taking a prominent part in the last scene. Probably it was done on the principle that all's fair in love and war !

Then, again, to make confusion worse confounded, there came from America a gruesome story told by Mr. Frederick Schwend, a New York broker who had recently returned from Germany, where he had been told that the firing party on the fatal morning had consisted of thirty men, twenty of whom had blank cartridges in their rifles.

The romantic story according to this witness, was that Nurse Cavell had fainted at the final moment and that the men had begged their officers to shoot her then and there, declaring it beyond human endurance to see such suffering. The officers had given way ; a great volley of flame flashed out, but when the body of the Englishwoman had been examined later, it was found that only one bullet had penetrated.

Pure fiction ! First-Lieutenant Behrens, the officer in charge of the prisons in Brussels at that time, testified afterwards that no untoward incident of any sort had taken place. He said that both the prisoners had met their death with the greatest courage, and that the entire proceedings had taken no more than two or three minutes.

After the shooting was over the bodies were buried in the Tir National in the presence of the officiating German clergymen, where, with crosses over them, they remained until the end of the war.

\* \* \* \* \*

October had come down on Brussels. The leaves were falling in the boulevards, and the hearts of the people were heavy with the black oppression of the "occupant."

In the prison of St. Gilles the unfortunate Mlle. Thuliez, although she had been reprieved from death, waited with foreboding another trial. It was only a trifling matter—a slip of paper she had brought to Baucq's house, containing some information about the movements of German munition trains leaving Cambrai. But, as she well knew, it was sufficient under German law to condemn her to death.

In the middle of November she received the news that she would be taken to Cambrai to be tried, and in due course she found herself in one of those convict carriages which are still such a depressing sight in France—a long row of tiny compartments into which the prisoners are thrust with no possibility of movement.

One might have thought that, after the terrible ordeal she had already undergone, the Germans would have had mercy on her. But no, justice had to be satisfied.

Conditions in Cambrai were infinitely worse than in Brussels. The jail in which she was put was filthy and alive with vermin. Mlle. Thuliez, unable to face the ordeal of undressing at night, could only cover herself with a rug she had brought.

Breakfast consisted of an unsavoury lump of bread and a bowl of liquid called coffee. In the middle of the day an equally unappetising soup arrived, while all that Mlle. Thuliez received in the way of supper

was some chocolate, which had to last her until the following morning.

The weeks went by. More than a month elapsed before she heard that the court-martial would take place. Her old enemies, Bergan and Pinkhoff, were on hand to testify to what they had found in Brussels, and it says a good deal for Bergan's audacity that he had the impudence to hold out his hand to Mlle. Thuliez—for all the world as though nothing had happened. When she declined to have anything to do with him he told her in threatening tones that she was foolish to make an enemy of him.

The trial itself was no different from hundreds of other similar ones. There were six prisoners altogether, and the prosecutor asked that they should all be sentenced to death. The usual farce of providing defending lawyers—in this instance young Germans—was on hand. But the result, of course, was foregone. After the court-martial had heard all the evidence the captives were taken back to their cells to await the announcement of their fate.

Four days went by. Mlle. Thuliez was notified that her sentence was penal servitude for life. As she was already undergoing a similar punishment, and it was very doubtful whether she had more than one life to live, the additional term did not signify a great deal. Her fellow-prisoners received terms varying from ten to twelve years.

More dull and dreary days passed. Waiting for she knew not what, Mlle. Thuliez spent a miserable Christmas. Early in January, however, one of the jailers informed her that she was now being taken to

serve her sentence. The officer who had prosecuted her at the court-martial arrived at her cell with the news, and told her that she would be shot if she attempted to escape.

Escape ! Accompanied by a soldier with a loaded rifle, herded into an empty carriage, bound for she knew not where ! Greatly to her surprise, after an apparently interminable journey she found herself in Brussels once more. She said to the soldier that, now they had reached their destination, he might take the cartridges out of his rifle.

"I shan't do anything of the sort," retorted the man. "If I let you go they would give me ten years in jail."

A prison van was waiting for them outside the station. In a few minutes Mlle. Thuliez found herself back in St. Gilles, where she was notified that in due course she would be sent to the convict prison of Siegburg, near Bonn, where the Countess de Belleville and the Princess de Croÿ had already been taken.

\* \* \* \* \*

How efficient was the German stranglehold over Brussels immediately before and after *l'affaire Cavell* was demonstrated in sensational fashion a few weeks after the English nurses had returned.

Early in January, 1916, the Belgian police in Brussels found the body of a young man in the rue Artan, Schaerbeek, one of the suburbs of the city. On the body were found papers which seemed to indicate that the deceased, who was in the early 'twenties, was in the pay of the German police, and had been

engaged in the task of recruiting able-bodied Belgians solely for the purpose of betraying them.

Brussels had long passed the stage of being shocked by any occurrence. This was such an extraordinary affair, however, that soon the whole city hummed with it—this despite the fact that no mention of the matter appeared in the papers.

It was significant that the German police took possession of the body and would allow no one to see it. However, it transpired that the dead youth was one Maurice Neels-Rhode, the son of a Major Victor Neels, a retired officer of the Belgian army, and a German mother. Further news that leaked out was to the effect that the Germans had intended to send him as a spy to England. On his body the Belgian police had found a passport of a neutral country, which clearly indicated that he was soon to be used as a Secret Service man.

I have already mentioned in this story the appearance of a document in the dossier of the case which set out, with cynical indifference, the fact that the authorities had put into Baucq's cell, in the hope of extracting damaging confessions, a *mouton*, or, as it is commonly termed in England and America, a "stool-pigeon."

This young Neels-Rhode was the "stool-pigeon." The tremendous indignation that had been felt in Brussels over the death of Philippe Baucq had been increased by the disclosure of the trick that had been played upon him by the Germans.

Living in Brussels at that time was a deeply patriotic waiter named Louis Bril. He had not been able to

join the army, but he had already rendered considerable service to his country by finding guides who would take men across the frontier. He had known Baucq well, and when it came to his knowledge that this young Neels-Rhode had betrayed him, he set out to trap the traitor.

From the beginning he was positive that Neels was the culprit. Bril succeeded in making his acquaintance, under the plea that he wanted to reach Holland and eventually join the Belgian army. To watch him more closely he got in touch with an old colonel, Bertrancourt by name, who lived only a couple of doors away from Neels-Rhode, openly told him what he suspected, and received permission to keep a watch on the house of the traitor.

Surveillance extending over some weeks confirmed all the suspicions.

On the morning of January 8 Bril had made up his mind that the deed must be done. He set out to follow Neels-Rhode, waiting an opportunity to achieve his end. Later in the day his friend Leclerc joined in the pursuit. They saw Neels pick up a woman and take her out to Schaerbeek, where the pair separated.

It was obvious then that their man was going home for the night. The two men hurried off to the rue Artan, and, when Neels approached, Bril went up to him and said sharply: "Here, I want a word with you."

Neels did not recognise him at first. "Who are you?" he asked, and there was fear in his voice.

Bril did not answer him, but cried out, "You dirty, treacherous brute!" Before he could utter another word, Neels tried to pull a pistol from his pocket. He was not quick enough, however. Bril fired first. Two flashing reports stabbed the darkness; Neels toppled over, dead.

Such a deed could not go unchallenged. The German police questioned the dead youth's father, who informed them that he had reason to suspect that Colonel Bertrancourt and his wife were no friends of his. Both of them were arrested, and the police, on taking possession of the Bertrancourt home, found other evidence which gave them a clue to Louis Bril, who was arrested with Leclerc.

Poetic justice made no appeal to the Germans. Maître Sadi Kirschen, who had been approached by Bril's parents to defend their son, first interviewed Lieutenant Bergan, who told him that the higher authorities intended to make an example of the waiter.

Kirschen called on Dr. Stöber, pleading for mercy.

"Would it be possible for me to defend this young man?" he asked.

"I don't think so," Stöber said decidedly. "It is a political crime."

"But," pleaded the Maître, "this man Neels was a worthless fellow. It cannot be denied that he deserved his death."

Stöber gave a cynical laugh. "I am not saying he was a hero," he remarked; "but, nevertheless, we had our uses for him."

Bril was tried, with his fellow-accused, on

February 8. Little time was wasted over the proceedings. A day sufficed for hearing the evidence, and at five o'clock in the afternoon of February 10 Bril and the other prisoners were brought into court to hear their sentences.

The waiter was condemned to die, Leclerc to serve ten years' hard labour. The old colonel and his wife were lucky enough to escape with a mere month, while the father of Leclerc, whom the Germans charged with not keeping proper control over his son, was flabbergasted to learn that he would be kept in hard labour for five years.

Brussels had been stirred to its depths by the tragic fate overhanging Louis Bril. It began to assume almost the importance of the Cavell case. Maître Kirschen, who had interested himself in the matter, informed the parents of the condemned man that they would have to move heaven and earth to save their son.

The aid of the Papal Nuncio was enlisted. He said he would make a personal appeal to von Bissing. No satisfaction could be obtained in that quarter, however, and, as a last resort, the Spanish minister, the Marquis de Villalobar, who had so actively participated in the attempt to save Nurse Cavell, was approached.

According to Maître Kirschen's information, the time was drawing short. The Spanish minister sent back a message that he could do nothing, and then the aid of one of the professors at the University of Brussels, who had known Bril, was evoked for the purpose of making a personal appeal to Dr. Stöber.

It was in vain. Dr. Stöber was out dining that night, and the professor, anxious to do something,

then made his way to the house of Baron Lambert de Rothschild. As luck would have it, the American minister, Mr. Brand Whitlock, was dining with the baron. Mr. Whitlock had never refused his aid in these distressing cases. He volunteered to give the professor a letter of introduction to Baron von der Lancken, the German Political Minister.

It was now growing *very* late. Von der Lancken, careful, perhaps, after his experiences in the case of Nurse Cavell, agreed to do what he could, and at once communicated with the Governor-General.

He received no satisfaction there. All von Bissing would say was that the Military Governor, General von Sauberzweig, was the only person who could save Bril from death.

Still the professor did not despair. He made his way to von Sauberzweig's house, and there, in the drawing-room of the Military Governor, pleaded for the life of the poor waiter.

"You are wasting your time," was the General's final retort. "Once I have made up my mind I do not change it."

At dawn the following morning Bril died. Calm and courageous to the end, he was brought to the Tir National at six o'clock in the morning. His father and two other relatives saw him arrive in a motor-car, and watched with agonised eyes his disappearance inside the great building. They waited . . . and waited . . . and waited. Half an hour later a crash of rifles re-echoed through the still morning air.

Bril was dead.

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This General von Sauberzweig, whose name in German signifies "Clean Twig"—save the mark!—seems to have been an unsavoury sort of brute, completely lost to all feelings of humanity.

The world-wide horror evinced over the shooting of Nurse Cavell speedily brought him into disgrace with his royal master, who was quick to realise the tremendous harm done to the German cause. The following year, shortly after the execution of Louis Bril, he was superseded, his activities being confined to a minor post in the *Kriegministerium*.

Some time in 1916, Professor Vernon Kellogg, the eminent American jurist and scholar, happened to be in Berlin, and was curious to hear at first-hand why Nurse Cavell had been singled out for death. He got into communication with von Sauberzweig, who invited him to call at the hotel where he was then living.

The German's greeting was about as strange as one could imagine: "Will you shake hands with the murderer?"

Professor Kellogg did so; the two men sat down, and von Sauberzweig said: "I suppose you have come to hear why I had Nurse Cavell executed? The reason is quite simple. One of my sons was blinded by a bullet on the Western Front. That bullet may have been fired by one of the men recruited in Belgium and sent across the frontier by Nurse Cavell."

"On that principle, then," said the professor, "you would shoot any prisoner of war who fell into your hands?"

“Certainly not !” was the indignant reply. “But any person who claims the privileges of a non-combatant has no right to complain if he or she takes an active part in war. That is what Nurse Cavell did.”

## CHAPTER XVI

VENGENCE IS MINE; I WILL REPAY, *saith the Lord*. The captives who came streaming home, shattered in health, from German convict prisons, were determined that the foul treachery which had been in evidence all through the Cavell affair should not go unpunished.

Nor was their indignation confined to the betrayers of the Englishwoman; in Brussels there were innumerable good friends of Philippe Baucq who swore that the man who had betrayed him, Quien, should be hunted down and made to pay the price of his infamy.

When the Germans had finished with him, which was in 1917, he seems to have made his way back to France, where he fell into the hands of the police for some petty fraud. After serving a prison sentence he was drafted into the army; the authorities knew nothing of his misdeeds in Belgium, and it was not until January, 1919, when both France and Belgium were being scoured for him, that he was discovered under a false name wearing French uniform.

He was arrested and charged with "Having from 1914 to 1917 in France, Belgium, Germany and Switzerland maintained an understanding with enemies of the State for the purpose of furthering their enterprises and seconding their progress." In other words, high treason.

The principal charge in the indictment was that of having betrayed the members of the Cavell organisation, and to that end all those still living who had come into contact with him were brought to Paris in June, 1919, when his court-martial began.

An interminable procession of witnesses went into the box to give evidence against him ; there was even testimony from the ex-courier, Otto Mayer, who, alas ! could not be induced to leave German territory to give evidence, but confined himself to visiting neutral Holland, where he made a statement to the British military attaché.

Step by step, over a period of seven days, these witnesses proved how Quien had assisted the German police to run down the people associated with the de Croÿs and Nurse Cavell ; how he had induced the Princess de Croÿ to photograph him in the uniform of a French officer ; his appearance at Nurse Cavell's Home, and the attempts he had made to trap Madame Bodart.

Even one of the maps showing the routes taken to the Dutch frontier by the guides was produced in court.

Quien himself went into the witness-box. Not for nothing had he been nicknamed the "Lamp-post." Painfully thin, shifty of eye, but plausible to a degree, his story went that while he had undoubtedly worked for the Germans, it was by *force majeure*. Secure in the knowledge that they were still missing, he blamed Jeannes and Jacoby for the actual betrayal of Baucq and Nurse Cavell.

For all the good he did himself he might just as

well have pleaded guilty. The officers constituting the court heard him out with barely concealed hostility, and when the trial concluded it was obvious what the verdict would be—death.

A death sentence it was, but commuted to something infinitely worse—twenty years' transportation to the terrible convict settlement in French Guiana.

And there, for fifteen years, Quien lay and rotted. Efforts were made from time to time to have his case re-opened. When his confederate, Armand Jeannes, was tried in 1922, it became fairly clear that Quien was but a minor villain by comparison with "Le Petit Belge." However, France is never particularly merciful towards traitors. The President of the Republic uncompromisingly declined to release the "Lamp-post." In Guiana he remained for fifteen years; then, in 1934, he was brought home and set at liberty—still talking about proving his innocence!

A communication reached me from a French journalist asking whether I thought anyone in England would be interested in his version of *l'affaire Cavell*. I could only reply that the time for explanations had long passed.

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The hunt for Armand Jeannes went on a long time, and then, for want of a clue, died down. But one afternoon in Brussels, in the autumn of 1921, he was recognised hurrying into the Gare du Nord by one of his victims, who dogged his movements and had him arrested.

The Belgian police kept him for many months

before they had all the evidence they needed. But in March, 1922, they were ready, and Jeannes was taken to Mons, the town so familiar to him, to face as formidable a series of charges as any man has ever known. The Advocate-General of Belgium, M. Camille Pholien, was there, as were a hundred witnesses prepared to testify to his unending acts of treason.

If it hardly seemed possible that this bourgeois lawyer's clerk could be the villain guilty of crimes which, as a German who attended the court said, would have caused him to be torn to pieces in the market-square if he had been tried in Germany, there were here again, as in the case of Quien, numberless people to prove what a black-hearted scoundrel he was.

By comparison with Quien, however, he looked a masterful individual fully capable of any misdeeds. All through his sixteen days' trial he stamped and raved, shouting at the witnesses, violently jeering at them, and then telling the President of the Court that if the proceedings were not conducted more to his liking he would refuse to take any further part in them !

Jeannes, it seems, had been the particular ally of Captain von Kirchenheim, that notorious bullying Chief of Police at Maubeuge, whose activities I have already described at some length. There was a ripple of interest in court when M. Pholien read a letter from Jeannes to von Kirchenheim which ended : " Always yours, night and day, your devoted collaborator, Armand Jeannes."

Creature of von Kirchenheim he certainly was. Waef, a tailor from Cambrai, related how Jeannes had

put a mistress of his into the cells of suspects to wheedle incriminating information out of them—at von Kirchenheim's instigation. The tailor's daughter followed, to tell a story of how the Chief of Police had offered to set her father at liberty at the price of her honour—a proposal which she had answered with a blow in the face.

Jeannes' part in *l'affaire Cavell* was plain enough. Mlle. Thuliez spoke of being confronted with Jeannes immediately after she had been arrested. Capiou, the engineer, testified that Jeannes was present at his capture, while Albert Libiez, the lawyer, whose house had been searched by the man he had employed, spoke of the vain attempts he had made in Brussels to be confronted with the person who had denounced him to the secret police.

There was no end of the witnesses. The Countess Jeanne de Belleville told of the visit Jeannes had made to her Château of Montignes, and how even von Kirchenheim had protested at the violence of his methods. She did not actually recognise him now; but her sister, Countess Marie, had no hesitation in declaring that Jeannes had been among the police present at the time that her delicate sister was taken into custody.

Jeannes was undismayed by this procession of witnesses. One little man, whom he cross-examined with terrible ferocity, cried out on leaving the witness-box: "Vagabond, there is no word in the dictionary to describe you!"

"The same to you!" retorted Jeannes, completely unmoved.

His brazen attitude amazed the counsel he had engaged to defend him. In fact, he took his defence entirely into his own hands.

There was another scene when witnesses were brought in to give evidence about the money he had received from the Germans. Other people told about blackmail having been levied upon them to save their houses from being searched.

"Let us understand each other," said the President quietly, when Jeannes was on his feet shouting out that he was the victim of liars. "If you do not behave yourself you will be removed from the court until you do."

"I do not wish to hear any more witnesses," the prisoner roared out. "I want to retire. You can conduct this trial without me."

"Remove the prisoner," said the President abruptly. Jeannes went out quietly enough and remained there while people were testifying against him. He was brought back, however, as each fresh witness entered the box.

"I do not want to hear him!" exclaimed this strange creature, and out he went again.

There could only be one end to the trial. After the damning statement of a Madame Werres, who said that Jeannes had been living in her house in Liège immediately before the Armistice, and one night when he was drunk had told her that he had been instrumental in the condemnation of 126 people, all Jeannes' protestations were so much waste of time. He had witnesses to call on his own behalf, certainly, but most of them turned against him.

## EDITH CAVELL

His guilt, therefore, could call for but little consideration. He was quickly found guilty of high treason and espionage, and the President of the Court pronounced sentence of death. But Belgium has long since abolished capital punishment; for Jeannes there was the alternative of twenty years' rigorous imprisonment, which must have been an infinitely greater price to pay than death at the hands of a public executioner.

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And that may be said to mark the termination of this romantic story of the Great War. To-day Nurse Cavell lies in the peaceful grounds of Norwich Cathedral, not far away from the place where she was born. A monument to her memory stands near Trafalgar Square, and in Brussels there is the Avenue Edith Cavell to keep her name alive in the hearts of the Belgian people.

But best of all the memorials that have been erected to her is the place she holds in the memory of all English men and women—that of a woman who was content to die for her country, blaming no one, and meeting her end as courageously as she had lived.

